ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO 'ILM AL-KALĀM

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In the name of God,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
All praise is due to God, Lord of the Worlds
And peace and blessings be upon Muhammad
and his Holy Household

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A NOTE ON HONORIFICS

Please note the following abbreviations used in this text:

(s.a.w.) - *ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-ālihi wa-sallam*:
This honorific phrase is used exclusively after mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad and means "may God's prayers and peace be upon him and his family."

(a.s.) - *ʿalayhi/ ʿalayhā/ ʿalayhim al-salām*
This phrase, meaning "peace be upon him/her/them," is used after mentioning prophets and Infallibles other than the Prophet Muḥammad.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST ARABIC EDITION

Concern with metaphysical matters is an innate human inclination that emerges in every individual from early youth and the beginning of life, as long as the mirror of their God-given nature remains pure and clear, unclouded by external influences.

This concern and interest is one of God's greatest blessings upon His servants, as it drives them to seek out the origin of this universe, its Creator and Originator, and ask the vital questions that follow from this.

However, this interest only proves beneficial when it leads one to the care of the Prophets (a.s.) and is accompanied by rational proof and logical demonstration. At that point, this attraction becomes like a blessed tree that "yields its fruit in every season" and cannot be shaken by storms, no matter how violent and uprooting they may be.

But if this interest is left without nurturing until it is exploited by deviant desires and opinions, this sacred flame is extinguished and disappears under a pile of illusions and superstitions.

For this reason, those responsible for education must nourish human nature with decisive and clear rational proofs that we have been guided to by the wise scripture and authentic noble traditions,

as well as what intellectual investigations have produced throughout the ages in religious circles.

Hence, the Imams of the Prophet's household (a.s.), one after another, deliberately refined and illuminated minds with conclusive proofs, taking into account the intellectual level of their time, and even considering the level of understanding of future generations.

Muslims have been interested in recording theology (*kalām*) since the time of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), deriving its principles from his sermons and words. It continued to grow and develop through discussions and debates until the fourth century, when great intellectual figures emerged who authored valuable books in this field.

Among the Shi'i scholars, we find the most senior Shaykh Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Nawbakht (from the notables of the fourth century AH), Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413 AH/1022 CE), al-Sharif al-Murtada (d. 436 AH/1045 CE), Abu al-Salah al-Halabi (d. 447 AH/1055 CE), Shaykh al-Ta'ifa al-Tusi (d. 460 AH/1068 CE), Ibn Zuhra al-Halabi (d. 585 AH/1189 CE), Sadid al-Din al-Himsi (d. 600 AH/1204 CE), al-Muhaqqiq al-Tusi (d. 672 AH/1274 CE), Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (d. 679 AH/1280 CE), al-Allama al-Hilli (d. 726 AH/1326 CE), al-Fadil al-Miqdad (d. 826 AH/1423 CE), and other distinguished scholars and exceptional learned figures.

What those blessed scholars wrote in this field were magnificent treatises that fulfilled their mission completely.

However, since each era requires its own style of writing that corresponds to its needs and responds to its demands, research in this age must be suitable for its needs and requirements.

Our esteemed scholar and religious authority Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani has undertaken this task in our present age. He is among those who have dedicated a large portion of their life to this field. He has authored extensively in this discipline, and his pen has produced various works suitable for every level. Among his finest blessed contributions to this discipline are his valuable lectures delivered at the Religious Scientific University of Qom, which were recorded by his accomplished student Shaykh Ḥasan Makkī al-'Āmilī - may God preserve him - under the title *al-Ilāhiyyāt ʿalā Hudā al-Kitāb wa-l-*

Sunna wa-l-'Aql ("Theology According to the Scripture, Tradition, and Reason"). These lectures were comprehensive in covering all aspects of this discipline and addressed all its important issues, examining various views after subjecting them to fair logical judgment. The book satisfies the needs of religious students who wish to grasp theological views across all topics, and it has been the core of theological studies at Qom University for years.

With our teacher's permission, I have summarized this valuable book in a way that preserves its purposes, objectives, and methodology. My work consists of:

- First, summarizing the expressions and selecting the most concise;
- Second, limiting it to the strongest and clearest proofs;
- Third, streamlining discussions to avoid prolixity;
- Fourth, reorganizing and rearranging the discussions;
- Fifth, adding supplemental materials in some areas.

What we have added is derived from the light of his knowledge and drawn from the spring of his excellence. He has performed a great service to knowledge, to the people of knowledge, and to the contemporary generation.

May God preserve him as a beacon of knowledge and a torch of guidance; indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Responding.

'Alī al-Rabbānī al-Gulpāygānī

Qom, 30 Rajab 1414 AH/1994 CE

INTRODUCTION TO THE TENTH ARABIC EDITION

The book *al-Ilāhiyyāt ʿalā Hudā al-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna wa-l-ʿAql* is among the most comprehensive and finest works written on Islamic beliefs in the present age.

The book consists of lectures by our teacher, the leading scholarly authority Ayatollah Jaʿfar Sobhani, which were recorded and written by his accomplished student Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan Makkī al-ʿĀmilī.

The resulting doctrinal encyclopedia was published in four volumes.

In the past, I summarized and refined it, and this summary became one of the required courses at the Religious Scientific University in Holy Qom. I taught it repeatedly, as did several other accomplished scholars. They - may God preserve them - offered opinions about the book aimed at the necessity of presenting it in a different way to achieve these two objectives:

1. Consideration for the comprehension level of Islamic sciences students.
2. Harmony with the designated study period for this subject.

Therefore, in light of their suggestions and my teaching experiences, I completed some discussions, removed what lacked importance, and made changes to the arrangement of the book's topics, all based on Imam ʿAlī's (a.s.) saying: "Affairs are known through experience".[1]

Here I present the result of my work in this new comprehensive summary of the original encyclopedia, hoping that students of true sciences will benefit from it.

We thank God Almighty for His great kindnesses and guidance, and we thank the honorable teachers for their critical and corrective observations about the book.

ʿAlī al-Rabbānī al-Gulpāygānī

Qom, 29 Jumādā al-Ūlā 1427 AH/2006 CE

1. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, 444

PART I

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1

PRELIMINARIES AND PRINCIPLES

There are preliminaries and principles that the student should understand before beginning the discussion of proofs for God's existence, His unity, and His attributes. They are:

1- The Role of Divine Religion in Human Life

Religion is an intellectual revolution that leads humans to perfection and advancement in all important areas that have a close connection to human life; the most important of these are:

a. Correcting thoughts and beliefs and purifying them from illusions and superstitions;
b. Developing moral principles;
c. Improving social relationships.

As for the first domain: religion explains the reality of the universe as the creation of a supreme being who created matter, formed it, and defined it with laws and limits. It also explains human life as not having appeared in the universe in vain, nor was humanity

created without purpose. Rather, there is a higher purpose for humanity's existence on this planet, which can be achieved through the teachings of the prophets and guides sent by God.

In contrast to this religious explanation of the reality of the universe and human life stands the materialist explanation, which claims that primary matter is eternally self-existent and has given itself order, and that neither it nor the humans dwelling within it have any purpose beyond this material life. This explanation leads humanity to ignorance and superstition, for how can matter give itself order?! And can the cause and effect, the subject and object, the maker and the made be united?

From here it becomes clear that intellectual perfection is only achieved through religion, because it reveals vast horizons before one's mind and contemplation.

As for the second domain: religious beliefs constitute a foundation for moral principles, as adherence to values and their observance is inseparable from hardships and pains that are difficult for humans to bear without a spiritual factor that eases them and removes their difficulty. This includes sacrifice for the sake of truth and justice, maintaining trust, and helping the oppressed. These are some moral principles whose validity cannot be denied, but their implementation in society entails pain and difficulties. Belief in God and the reward and recompense for acting upon these principles is the best motivator for humans to implement them and endure the hardships and pains.

As for the third domain: religion considers all humans as created by one origin, so all are equal in essence and substance like the teeth of a comb, and it sees no meaning in nationalist distinctions and superficial differences. This is on one hand, and on the other hand, religious belief supports social principles because they become necessary duties for the religious person, and the person becomes self-motivated toward action and implementation, that is, implementing social duties and laws in various fields.

These are some of the domains in which religion has a clear role

and influence. After recognizing these remarkable effects, is it right to neglect investigating it and consign it to the corner of forgetfulness?

Yes, what we have mentioned about the role of religion and its influence on the vital aspects of human beings pertains to true religion that supports science and affirms morals without contradicting them. As for non-divine religions or those falsely attributed to divine revelation, these fall outside the scope of our discussion.

2- Religion and Human Nature

Psychologists believe that the human psyche has four dimensions, each of which is the source of specific effects:

a. The spirit of inquiry and discovery of truths. This dimension of the human spirit is an innate motivator for humanity's pursuit of understanding the universe and discovering truths.
b. Love of good and inclination toward righteousness and virtue. For this reason, humans find within themselves an inclination toward good and righteousness, and an aversion to evil and corruption. This innate feeling is the foundation of human values and morals.
c. Humanity's relationship with beauty in nature and craftsmanship. Precise and beautiful artifacts, artistic paintings, and magnificent sculptures derive their splendor and beauty from this dimension.
d. Religious consciousness that calls humans to believe that beyond this world there is another world from which this world derives its existence, and that humans, with all their characteristics, are connected to that world and draw from it.

This fourth dimension, which psychologists discovered in recent times and supported with various experiments, was emphasized by

the wise revelation centuries ago and referenced in its blessed verses, including the words of the Almighty:

"So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [This is] the natural disposition of God upon which He has created [all] people."[1]

The verse explicitly states that religion—meaning belief in the creator of the universe and humanity, and that humanity's destiny is in His hands—is something upon which humans were created and naturally disposed toward (*fiṭra*), just as they were created and naturally disposed toward many inclinations and instincts.

3- Religious Epistemology

The first step in understanding religion is identifying what constitutes valid knowledge within it. True religion does not consider every form of knowledge to be a reliable source; rather, it requires definitive knowledge obtained through appropriate epistemological tools. God says:

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - each of these will be questioned."[2]

You can see that the verse rejects any knowledge that falls outside the framework of definitive knowledge. For this reason, it condemns following the ways of forefathers without valid evidence and without certain knowledge of their correctness and authenticity. God says:

"And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, 'Indeed, we found our fathers upon a way, and we are following in their footsteps.'"[3]

And the Almighty responded to their statement by saying:

"Even if their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?"[4]

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1. Qur'an, 30:30
2. Qur'an, 17:36
3. Qur'an, 43:23
4. Qur'an, 5:104

One might ask: If following and imitating forefathers is condemned, why does Islam permit following religious scholars (*fuqahā'*) in matters of religious law?

The answer is that following a religious scholar in religious rulings is not of the condemned type of imitation (*taqlīd*), because when an ignorant person follows a knowledgeable one, they do so with evidence. This is the rational practice in all fields - one ignorant of a craft consults its expert, and one ignorant of medicine consults its specialist.

Furthermore, the fundamental beliefs are matters that every person can recognize through their intellect and natural disposition (*fiṭra*). Therefore, imitation has no place in these matters, except in what pertains to subtle and complex theological discussions, where it is permissible to rely on the opinions of prominent scholars of theology (*kalām*).

4- The Moral Duty to Investigate God's Existence

Reason compels and motivates the rational person to contemplate and search for the existence of God. This is because throughout history, there have been many religious reformers and moral leaders who sacrificed themselves to reform and refine society. These individuals, appearing throughout the centuries and ages, called human societies to believe in God and His perfect attributes. They claimed that He has assigned duties and obligations to His servants (*'ibād*), that life does not end with death but rather humans transfer from one realm to another, and that whoever fulfills their duties will receive complete reward, while whoever opposes and shows arrogance will face severe consequences.

This is what the people of this world have heard from the men of divine revelation and reform. These individuals were not accused of lying or fabrication; rather, signs of truthfulness were evident in their lives, actions, and remembrances. At this point, reason drives the thinking person to investigate the truth of their claims to prevent potential or probable harm that such people warn of.

There is another aspect to the obligation of searching for God's existence. Humans are immersed in blessings throughout their lives - this is something no one can deny. On the other hand, reason independently determines the necessity of thanking the benefactor, and gratitude cannot be realized without knowing the benefactor.[5] Based on these two principles, it becomes necessary to search for the benefactor who has showered humans with blessings. Getting to know Him through research is a response to reason's call and its invitation to thank the benefactor, which depends on knowing Him.[6]

5. If gratitude to the benefactor is necessary, then knowledge of him becomes obligatory. The antecedent is true, therefore the consequent is also true. As for the truth of the antecedent, it is among the rational axioms. As for the correlation, it is because it is the fulfillment of gratitude, and its performance depends on knowledge of the benefactor, which is clear.

6. There is another motivation that calls humans to search for the existence of the Creator of the universe, which is that humans naturally search for the causes of events. There is no event except that they examine its cause and desire to understand it. At this point, the question arises in their mind about the cause of the universe and all events - is there a cause that brought the cosmic universe into existence beyond material causes and reasons or not? Thus, the search for the existence of the Maker of the universe is innate to humans. See: *Uṣūl al-Falsafa* by Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Article 14.

2

THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN AND PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF THE ALL-KNOWING CREATOR

The proofs indicating the existence of a creator for this universe and the source of life are many and varied. We will suffice with presenting three of them:

1. The argument from design;
2. The argument from temporal origination;
3. The argument from contingency and necessity.

In this chapter, we will explain the argument from design and say:

Among the clearest rational proofs and the most accessible to all is the argument from design, which is finding guidance to God's existence through observing and contemplating the precise and magnificent order prevailing in the universe.

What is Order?

The concept of order (*niẓām*) is among the clearest concepts to the mind. One of its characteristics is that it occurs between different things, whether they are parts of a compound, individuals of one essence, or different essences. There is interconnection and coordination between parts, or balance and harmony between individuals,

leading to a specific aim and purpose, like the compatibility between parts of a tree, and the balance between the life of trees and animals.

Summary of the Argument from Design

The argument from design is based on two premises: one empirical and the other rational.

As for the first: There is an order prevailing over natural phenomena that humans know either through direct sensory observation or through experimental scientific tools and methods. Natural sciences continue to reveal new aspects and dimensions of the order prevailing in the natural world. There are thousands of treatises and books written about natural sciences that are full of descriptions of the amazing order in the natural world. Therefore, there is no need to elaborate further in this area.

As for the second: After observing this order and what it entails of calculation, measurement, balance, and harmony, the intellect immediately judges that something of this nature can only emerge from a capable, knowing agent who possesses will and purpose. It is impossible for it to occur by chance or as a result of chaotic movements of blind, deaf matter. The mere conception of the concept of order and its inherent connection with calculation and knowledge is sufficient to affirm that order is inseparable from the existence of a knowing organizer who brought it about. This is similar to the intellect's judgment that every contingent being must have a cause that brings it into existence, and other self-evident rational principles.

The Argument from Design in Divine Revelation

Divine revelation has given great importance to the argument from design, and there are many verses in the Qur'an that call upon humans to study the universe and the order and perfection within it,

so that they may be guided to the existence of God, His knowledge, and His wisdom.[1]

We see that the Qur'an draws human attention to journey through the horizons and within themselves, saying:

"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth".[2]

And it says: "Say: Look at what is in the heavens and the earth".[3]

And it says: "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that sail in the sea with what benefits people, and what God has sent down from the sky of water, reviving thereby the earth after its death, and dispersing therein all kinds of creatures, and the directing of the winds and the clouds subjected between heaven and earth - there are signs for people who reason".[4]

And it says: "Do they not reflect upon themselves?".[5]

And it also says: "And in yourselves - do you not see?".[6]

And Ali (a.s.) said: "Do they not look at the smallest of what He created? How He perfected its creation and refined its composition, and made for it hearing and sight, and formed for it bone and skin. Look at the ant in its small body and delicate form, barely perceptible to the eye or comprehensible to thought, how it crawls upon its earth and goes about seeking its sustenance, carrying grain to its hole and storing it in its dwelling, gathering during its summer for its

---

1. The argument from design branches from the law of causality, and that every event must have a cause that brings it into being. At this point, the discussion turns to the attributes of that cause - must it be knowing, capable and having free will, or not? The argument from design aims to prove the existence of these attributes for the cause of cosmic events and their agent. This is what the Holy Qur'an and Islamic traditions advocate in calling for the study of the universe and contemplation of its signs.
2. Qur'an, 41:53
3. Qur'an, 10:101
4. Qur'an, 2:164
5. Qur'an, 30:8
6. Qur'an, 51:21

winter, and during its coming for its going.[7].. So woe to those who deny the Ordainer and reject the Director..."[8]

And Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said in what he dictated to his student al-Mufaḍḍal ibn 'Umar:

"The first of lessons and proofs of the Creator, may His sanctity be exalted, is the arrangement of this world and the composition of its parts and their organization as they are. For if you contemplate it with your thought and distinguish it with your intellect, you will find it like a built house prepared with everything His servants need. The sky is raised like a ceiling, the earth spread out like a carpet, the stars illuminating like lamps, the jewels stored like treasures, and everything in it prepared for its purpose. And humans are like those given authority over that house and entrusted with all that is in it, with various types of plants prepared for their needs, and different kinds of animals devoted to their interests and benefits.

In this is clear evidence that the world is created with determination, wisdom, order and harmony, and that its Creator is One - He who composed it and organized its parts together, may His sanctity be exalted and His majesty be elevated."[9]

Objections and Their Answers

There are objections that have been raised about the argument from design that we must answer. The well-known ones among them are what David Hume[10], the English philosopher (1711-1776 CE), presented in his book *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*[11], which are six objections as follows:

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7. *Al-Ṣadar* with vowel movement (on the pattern of *al-khabar*) means the return of a traveler from their destination, meaning gathering during the days of ability to move for the days of inability to do so.
8. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 185. The Imam (a.s.) has a wonderful description of the creation of bees, bats and peacocks through which he proves the existence of the Creator and His power and knowledge.
9. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 3/62
10. [Empty footnote]
11. Empty footnote

The First Objection

The argument from design does not meet the conditions of empirical proof, because it has not been tested regarding another world besides this one. True, we have experienced human-made artifacts and seen that they do not exist without an intelligent maker, as in the case of houses, ships, clocks and other things. However, we have not experienced this in the cosmos, for we have not observed other worlds similar to this world that were created by an intelligent and wise creator so that we could make the same judgment about the creation of this world. Therefore, we cannot prove that it has a creating cause like human-made artifacts.

The answer to this is: The argument from design is not an empirical proof where the criterion would be generalizing the judgment based on complete similarity between tested and untested things. Rather, it is a rational proof where the intellect, after observing the order governing the natural world and reflecting upon it, judges that it is the creation of a knowing, capable, and choosing being, without need for analogy or similar methods.

The fact that one of its premises is sensory does not detract from the proof being rational, for the role of the senses in it is limited to establishing the subject - that is, establishing order in the universe. As for the judgment and conclusion, these return to the intellect and are based on rational calculations. This is similar to when the senses establish that here is a square - the intellect immediately judges that its four sides are equal in length.

The intellect sees a clear correlation between order with its three premises - namely: interconnection, harmony, and purposefulness - and the involvement of consciousness and intellect. So when it observes what exists in the eye's apparatus, for example, of order meaning the realization of parts that differ in quantity and quality, and their harmony in a way that enables them to cooperate and interact with each other to achieve its specific purpose, it judges that this is the act of a great creator, due to its need for the involvement of consciousness, intellect, purposefulness, and intention.

The Second Objection

There are phenomena and events in the natural world that are unbalanced and outside the system, which do not align with the claimed order nor with the wisdom attributed to the creator of the universe, such as earthquakes and floods.

The answer to this is: What are considered cosmic events of evil (*shurūr*) like earthquakes and floods have their own special order in the universe, arising from specific causes governed by particular calculations and equations. Humans have succeeded in discovering some of these, though others remain unknown to them.[12] As for whether these are beneficial or harmful to humans, this has no connection to the argument from design, which aims to prove that there is an origin and agent for the natural world who possesses knowledge, power, and will. Discussion of this will come in the upcoming chapters, so await it.

The Third Objection

What prevents us from believing that the prevailing order in the natural world results from a factor inherent in nature itself, meaning that order is intrinsic to matter? For every substance has specific properties that are inseparable from it, and these properties are what have made the universe what it is now in terms of order.

The answer to this is: The most that the property of matter can achieve is to reach by itself only a certain stage of specific development and particular order - assuming this claim is correct - not to anticipate the future and prepare for emerging needs, nor to establish

12. If you say: The fact that natural evils are subject to cosmic laws and arise from specific natural causes goes back to the causal order, while the order intended in the argument from design is teleological order, and evils necessitate the disruption of order in this sense. I say: The reality of teleological order is that there is harmony and consistency prevailing in things directed towards a specific purpose and appropriate perfection for them, even if some may fail to reach their purpose due to obstacles, as in the case of evils.

an amazing and wonderful state of harmony and consistency between itself and different things and elements that have conflicting properties and systems.

Let us provide an example of what we mentioned, which is just one example among thousands in this universe. Suppose that the property of the human cell, when it settles in a woman's womb, is to move toward the embryonic form and then become a human with organized systems. However, there exists in the universe, regarding humans, an anticipation of the future and preparation for coming needs that cannot be attributed to the property of matter. This is evident in that before the human cell exists in the mother's womb, the woman was created with a special structure and systems suitable for the child's life, then the mother undergoes physical and spiritual developments in her systems appropriate for the child's life and development.

Can we consider all this anticipation to be among the properties of the human cell, and what is the relationship between this and that?

Three Other Objections by Hume

1. How can we prove that the existing order is the most perfect order, since we have not observed anything similar to compare it with?
2. Who knows, perhaps the creator of the universe tried creating the universe repeatedly until arriving at the current order?
3. Even if we assume that the argument from design proves the existence of a knowing and capable creator, it does not in any way indicate the perfect attributes like justice and mercy that are ascribed to Him.

The answer to these is: These objections arise from not understanding the purpose of the argument from design and the extent of

what it seeks to prove. The message of the argument from design is summarized in proving that the prevailing order in the universe does not arise from chance nor from an inherent property of blind matter, but rather exists through intellect, consciousness, calculation and planning, thus it has a knowing and capable creator.

As for whether this creator-maker is God, the Necessarily Existent, the Eternal and Everlasting or not, and whether His knowledge of the best order is essential and actual or reactive and gradual, and whether the existing order is the best order or not - these are matters that this argument does not undertake to prove, nor is it within its scope or requirements. Rather, in this regard, one must rely on other proofs such as the argument from contingency and necessity, and rely on self-evident or demonstrated rational principles mentioned in books of philosophy and theology, such as that His knowledge is essential and actual, not reactive and gradual, and that the existential order stems from the divine order and corresponds to it, and that divine intellectual order is the most perfect possible order, along with other philosophical principles.

3

THE ARGUMENT FROM TEMPORAL ORIGINATION

Among the proofs used to establish the existence of the creator of the universe is the argument from temporal origination (*ḥudūth*), which is well-known among the theologians. Explaining this proof depends first on defining temporal origination and its types, and second on proving the temporal origination of the world, so we say:

Definition of Temporal Origination and its Types

Temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) is a description of existence in terms of being preceded by non-existence, and it is of two types:

First: Temporal origination (*ḥudūth zamānī*), which is the precedence of something's existence by temporal non-existence, such as today being preceded by non-existence yesterday, and the events of today being preceded by non-existence yesterday.

Second: Essential origination (*ḥudūth dhātī*), which is the precedence of something's existence by non-existence in its essence, like all contingent existents that have existence through a cause external to their essence, and have nothing in their quiddity and essential definition except non-existence. This is the summary of what they have

mentioned regarding the definition of temporal origination and its division into temporal and essential, with the details to be sought in their proper place.[1] Furthermore, essential origination reduces to essential contingency (*imkān dhātī*), so arguing from essential origination reverts to the argument from contingency and necessity. Therefore, let us focus the argument here on temporal origination, and so we say:

The Temporal Origination of Life in the Material World

Science has clearly established that there is a continuous transfer of heat from hot bodies to cold bodies, and no natural process in the physical world occurs in the opposite direction. This means that the universe is moving toward a state where all bodies will have equal temperature, at which point no chemical or physical processes will occur. From this, we can conclude that life in the material world is temporally originated (*ḥādith*) and has a beginning, for if it were eternally existent without a beginning, it would have necessitated the consumption of material energies and the dissipation of material life phenomena long ago. Professor Frank Allen, a professor of physics, pointed to what we have mentioned by saying:

"The law of thermodynamics has proven that the world continues to move toward a point where the temperature of all bodies will be equal, and there will be no effective energy for life processes. If the world had no beginning and existed eternally, life would have met its end long ago. The shining sun, the stars, and the earth full of vital phenomena and processes are the truest witness that the world originated at a specific time, and thus the world is nothing but a temporally originated creation."[2]

1. See: *Bidāyat al-Ḥikma*: Stage 9, Chapter 3.

2. *Ithbāt Wujūd Khudā* (Persian): 21. The book contains articles by forty experts in various sciences, collected by the Christian scholar John Clover Monsma. The original book was in English, translated to Persian by Ahmad Aram and has been translated to Arabic under the title *Allāh Yatajallā fī 'Aṣr al-'Ilm*.

Exposition of the Argument from Temporal Origination

From what has preceded, the minor premise of the argument from temporal origination has become clear, which is that life in the material world is temporally originated and thus not essential to it.[3] To this we add the self-evident rational principle that everything non-essential must have a cause, just as every temporally originated thing must have an originator and creator. So what is the originator of material life? Is it matter itself or something else? The first assumption is invalid because matter, before the origination of life within it, lacked life, and that which lacks something cannot be the giver of that thing. Therefore, we must accept the second assumption: there exists another being beyond the material world that is the originator of matter and the creator of life within it.

Here ends the role of temporal origination in the argument, which has established that there exists a non-material being who originated this material world. As for whether that originator is contingent or necessary, temporally originated or eternal, this must be established by recourse to the argument from contingency and necessity and the impossibility of circular and infinite regress.

Answering Bertrand Russell's Objection

Bertrand Russell[4] has raised an objection here that must be

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3. Proving the temporal origination of the material world is not limited to what is mentioned in the text regarding experimental science, but there is a more precise method discovered by the great Islamic philosopher Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn (may his soul be sanctified) in light of what he proved regarding the substantial motion of matter. He said in *Risālat al-Ḥudūth* after proving substantial motion: "We have taught you and guided you to a divine path that none of those famous in this theoretical craft preceded us in proving the temporal origination of the corporeal world with all it contains of heavens and earths and what is between them..." - *Al-Rasā'il*, 48 - Shaykh Sobhani has a comprehensive investigation about the issue of substantial motion and what follows from it regarding the origination of the material world, see the book *Allāh Khāliq al-Kawn*.

4. (1872-1920 CE) English philosopher and mathematician. The original book was in English, translated to Persian by Sayyid Ḥasan Manṣūr.

addressed. After referring to the law of "thermodynamics" and its implications for the temporal origination of the material world, he stated:

"One cannot conclude from this that the world was created by a creator beyond it, because inferring the existence of a creator is a causal inference, and causal inference in science is only permissible when it conforms to scientific laws. It is known that it is impossible to conduct experimental operations on the creation of the world from nothing. Therefore, assuming the world was created by an originating creator is no more valid than assuming it came into being without an originating cause, as both assumptions violate the scientific laws we observe."[5]

The response to this is: The argument from temporal origination (*ḥudūth*) - as you have learned - consists of two premises. The first is the temporal origination of the world, which is a clear result of experimental scientific research. The second is the self-evident rational principle, which is not derived from scientific research but is entirely outside the scope of experimental science. If Russell's intent in equating the assumption of the world's creation with the assumption of its chance existence is that both are outside the scope of experimental sciences, then this is correct. However, they are not equal according to pure reason, which is the sole arbiter in such rational investigations that lie outside the scope of experimental sensory sciences. It seems Russell rejected reason and rational proofs, limiting the method of inference to sensation, induction, and experimentation, as is the choice of all European empiricist philosophers and others. The invalidity of this foundation has been demonstrated in its proper place.

The Argument from Temporal Origination in the Qur'an and Sunna

In the Qur'an there are explicit texts about the temporal origination

5. *Jahān Bīnī 'Ilmī* (Persian): 114.

of the universe - earth, heaven, and everything between and within them. God, Glorified is He, says: "How can He have a child when He has no consort and He created everything?"[6]

And God, Glorified is He, says: "God is He who created seven heavens, and of the earth their like."[7]

The first verse explicitly states the creation of everything, and the second verse explicitly states the creation of the heavens and earths. The following verse explicitly states the creation of every living creature. God, Glorified is He, says:

"And God created every living creature."[8]

And regarding humans, He said: "Has there not come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing mentioned?"[9]

And there are many other such verses. Everything created is temporally originated (*ḥādith*) in its essence, just as everything material that is created is temporally originated in both essence and time. Thus, the verses that speak of the created nature of the material world point to the argument from temporal origination (*burhān al-ḥudūth*).

There are many traditions narrated from the Pure Progeny (a.s.) regarding the temporal origination of the world. We will suffice with mentioning some of them:

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "Praise be to God who proves His existence through His creation, and His eternality through the temporal origination of His creation."[10]

And he (a.s.) said: "Praise be to God who proves His pre-eternality through the temporal origination of His creation, and His existence through the temporal origination of His creation."[11]

A man came to Imam Ali ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a.s.) and said: "O son of the Messenger of God, what is the proof for the temporal origina-

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6. Qur'an, 6:101
7. Qur'an, 65:12
8. Qur'an, 24:45
9. Qur'an, 76:2
10. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Sermon 152
11. Same source: Sermon 185

tion of the world?" He (a.s.) replied: "You did not exist and then you came to be, and you know that you did not bring yourself into existence, nor did anyone like you bring you into existence."[12]

Abū Shākir al-Dayṣānī came to Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) and asked: "What is the proof for the temporal origination of the world?" The Imam (a.s.) called for an egg and placed it in his palm and said: "This is a sealed fortress, inside it is a delicate membrane containing flowing silver and liquid gold, then it splits open to reveal something like a peacock. Did anything enter it?" He replied: "No."

The Imam (a.s.) said: "This is the proof for the temporal origination of the world."[13]

12. *Al-Tawḥīd*: 293, Chapter 42, Hadith 3
13. Same source: 292, Hadith 1

4

THE ARGUMENT FROM CONTINGENCY AND NECESSITY

The argument from contingency and necessity (*burhān al-imkān wa-l-wujūb*) is one of the most decisive proofs for the existence of the Necessarily Existent by Essence, who is God - exalted be His name. For this reason, the distinguished theologian Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī relied solely upon it in his valuable work *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*. The exposition of this argument depends on explaining several premises:

First Premise: The division of existence into necessary and contingent.

This is because existence is either such that its very essence necessitates its existence and requires its actualization in external reality - this is what is necessary by essence - or it has an equal relation to existence and non-existence and does not inherently require either one - this is what is contingent by essence, like individual human beings and other things.

Second Premise: Every contingent being needs a cause for its existence.

This is among the self-evident truths that no person of sound mind would doubt, for reason intuitively judges that whatever does not inherently necessitate existence depends for its existence on

something else, which is its cause. Otherwise, its existence would arise from its own essence, which is contradictory.

Third Premise: Circular causation (*dawr*) is impossible, which means that something brings about a second thing while simultaneously that second thing brings about the first thing.

The reason for its impossibility is that the first being a cause for the second requires that it precede it and the second follow it, while the second being a cause for the first requires that the second precede it. This would result in one thing, in one state and in relation to one thing, being both prior and not prior, posterior and not posterior, which is a conjunction of contradictories.

The impossibility of circular causation is intuitively known. To clarify this, we can give an example: If two friends agree to sign a document and each makes their signature conditional on the other's signature, the result would be that each signature depends on the other, and consequently that document would never be signed until the Day of Resurrection. This is something that humans grasp intuitively beyond grasping it through demonstration.

Fourth Premise: An infinite regress (*tasalsul*) is impossible.

This means the existence of an infinite chain of contingent causes and effects arranged in sequence, where everything is characterized by contingency, such that (A) depends on (B), and (B) on (C), and (C) on (D), and so on without ending in a cause that is neither contingent nor caused.

The proof of its impossibility is that being an effect (*ma 'lūliyya*) is a general characteristic of every part of the chain. This raises the question: if this enormous chain is itself an effect, what is the cause that brought it from non-existence into existence? The assumption is that there is nothing that can be a cause without being an effect, otherwise the chain would be broken and terminate at a specific point - namely, at the being that is self-subsistent and not in need of anything else, which is the Necessarily Existent by Essence.

If you were to say: Each effect in the chain is sustained by and dependent on the cause that precedes it, so the first part from the end of the chain exists through the second part, and the second through

the third, and so on to infinite parts and links, and this degree of dependence is sufficient to remove poverty and need.

I would respond: The assumption is that every part of the chain is characterized by contingency (*imkān*) and being an effect, and therefore its causality is not original or independent. Each link does not play the role of bestowing existence independently. Thus, there must be a cause beyond this chain that removes its poverty and serves as its support.

To clarify this situation, we can give an example: each of these effects, due to its essential poverty, is like a zero. The combination of these effects is like the combination of zeros. It is known that zero, whether finite or infinite zeros are added to it, does not produce a number. Rather, there must be alongside these zeros a real number that is self-subsistent in order to give meaning to reading those zeros.

We thus arrive at this conclusion: the assumption of infinite causes and effects necessarily leads to one of two things: either the existence of an effect without a cause, or the complete non-existence of anything in external reality. Both are self-evidently impossible.

Explaining the Argument from Contingency

Up to this point, we have completed the premises upon which the argument from contingency is built. Here is the argument itself:

There is no doubt that the realm of existence is filled with contingent beings, as evidenced by the fact that they come into existence and cease to exist, originate and perish, and undergo change and transformation, along with other conditions that are signs of contingency (*imkān*) and marks of dependency.

The matter of their existence cannot escape the following possibilities:

1. They have no cause, which is invalid according to the second premise (every contingent being requires a cause).
2. Some are causes for others and vice versa, which is

impossible according to the third premise (the impossibility of circular causation).

3. Some are effects of others, and those others are effects of yet others, without terminating in a cause that is not itself an effect, which is impossible according to the fourth premise (the impossibility of infinite regress).
4. Beyond these contingent beings there is a cause that is not an effect but rather necessarily existent by its essence, which is what we aim to prove.

Thus it becomes clear that the cosmic system can only be explained by saying that contingent beings terminate in that which is necessarily existent by its essence and self-subsistent. This is the only scenario that reason validates and considers free from problems, while all other scenarios entail impossibility, and whatever entails impossibility is itself impossible.

The Argument from Contingency in the Qur'an

The aspects of the argument from contingency have been alluded to in the Qur'an. Regarding the reality that the contingent being is an impoverished reality that does not possess existence, actualization, or anything else for itself, He indicated this by saying:

"O mankind! You are the ones in need of God, and God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy".[1]

Similarly, His statement: "And that it is He who enriches and satisfies".[2]

And His statement: "God is Self-Sufficient while you are the needy ones".[3]

Regarding the fact that the contingent being, including humans, cannot exist without a cause, and cannot be its own cause, He indi-

1. Qur'an, 35:15
2. Qur'an, 53:48
3. Qur'an, 47:38

cated this by saying: "Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators?".[4]

And regarding the fact that the contingent being cannot be the creator of another contingent being independently and without relying on a necessary creator, He indicated this by saying:

"Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain".[5]

Answering an Objection

An objection has been raised against the claim that contingent beings terminate in an eternal cause that is not an effect, saying that this necessitates making an exception to the rational principle, as reason dictates that nothing comes into existence without a cause.

Answer: The rational principle is specific to contingent beings that do not necessitate in themselves either existence or non-existence. The need for a cause is not a characteristic of existence qua existence, but rather a characteristic of contingent existence. Since contingent existence does not necessitate in itself either existence or non-existence, it must have a cause that brings it into existence. The matter of bringing into existence must terminate in that which has existence as its very essence and needs nothing else, as previously demonstrated in the proof for the impossibility of infinite regress. The confusion arose from overlooking that the need for a cause stems from contingency (*imkān*), not from existence itself.

4. Qur'an, 52:35
5. Qur'an, 52:36

PART II

ON DIVINE UNITY (TAWḤĪD) AND ITS LEVELS

5

INTRODUCING DIVINE UNITY

Divine unity occupies the highest position in divine religions. The first word in the messengers' proclamation was the call to divine unity and the rejection of dualism and polytheism. God says:

"We sent a messenger to every community, saying: 'Worship God and shun false deities.' Among them were some whom God guided, and others who were destined for error. So travel through the earth and observe what was the end of those who denied [the truth]."[1]

For this reason, the theologian must focus on the matter of divine unity more than other matters. A complete discussion of it requires examining the most important stages of divine unity, which are:

1. Unity of essence
2. Unity of attributes
3. Unity in creation
4. Unity in lordship
5. Unity in worship

1. Qur'an, 16:36

What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these.

6

UNITY OF ESSENCE

Unity of essence has two meanings: First, that His essence is simple with no parts, and second, that His essence is unique with no equal or peer. The first is sometimes expressed as the unicity (*aḥadiyya*) of essence and the second as His oneness (*wāḥidiyya*). *Sūrat al-Tawḥīd* alludes to these two meanings. His statement "Say: He is God, the One" alludes to the first meaning, and His statement "And there is none comparable to Him" alludes to the second meaning.

The Proof for the Simplicity of His Essence

Know that composition has several types:

1. Composition of rational parts only, such as genus and differentia.
2. Composition of both rational and external parts, such as matter and form and elemental parts.
3. Composition of quantitative parts, such as parts of a line and surface.

The claim is that His essence is simple and not composed of parts in any way.

The proof that He is not composed of external and quantitative parts is that He is free from body and matter, as will be discussed in the section on negative attributes.

The proof that He is not composed of rational parts is that the Necessarily Existent by essence has no quiddity (*māhiyya*), and that which has no quiddity has no rational parts that are genus and differentia.[1]

The reason for the absence of quiddity from Him, in this sense, is that quiddity in itself, considered in isolation from everything else, has an equal relation to existence and non-existence. Thus every quiddity in itself is contingent. Therefore, that which is not contingent has no quiddity, and God, being Necessarily Existent by essence, cannot be contingent by essence and thus has no quiddity.

Proofs of His Oneness:

Multiplicity Necessitates Composition

If there were another necessarily existent being, the two would share in being necessarily existent, and thus each would need to be distinguished from the other by something beyond that shared aspect. This would necessitate that each be composed of two things: one relating to what they share, and another to what distinguishes them. Yet we have learned that the Necessarily Existent by essence is simple, not composed of either rational or external parts.

Pure Existence Cannot be Duplicated or Repeated

It has been shown that the Necessarily Existent by essence has no quiddity, thus He is pure existence, and His existence is not mixed with any deficiency or lack. It is clear that any reality, when stripped

1. The term essence (*māhiyya*) has two meanings: First, what is said in response to the question "what is it?" which is also expressed as the self and reality. Second, that by which a thing is what it is in actuality, meaning identity (*huwiyya*). What is meant by negating essence from the Divine is the first meaning.

of any admixture and becomes pure, cannot be duplicated or multiplied.

Therefore, since He - glory be to Him - by virtue of having no quiddity is pure existence, multiplicity cannot apply to Him, resulting in His being one with no second or equal, which is what we sought to prove.

Unity of Essence in the Qur'an and Hadith

When the Qur'an describes God's oneness, it describes Him with "overwhelming power" (*qahhāriyya*) and says:

"He is God, the One, the Overwhelming"[2]

This meaning is found in several other verses in the Qur'an, and this is only because a limited, finite being is overwhelmed by the limits and constraints that govern it. Thus, if something is overwhelming (*qāhir*) in all aspects, it is not governed by limits, so limitlessness is inseparable from the attribute of being overwhelming.

From this, it becomes clear that His unity is neither numerical nor conceptual. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī said:

"Both numerical unity, like a single individual of a species, and specific unity, like humanity which is one species among many species, are overwhelmed by the limit that distinguishes one individual from another and one species from its like. Since nothing overwhelms Him - glory be to Him - and He is overwhelming above all things, He is not limited in anything. He is an existence untainted by non-existence, and a truth unaffected by falsehood. Thus to God belongs the pure perfection of every excellence".[3]

Furthermore, when the Leader of Monotheists, ʿAlī (a.s.), was asked about God's unity, he mentioned four meanings of unity, two of which are inappropriate for His divine presence and two of which are established for Him.

As for the two that are inappropriate for His divine presence, they are numerical unity and conceptual unity, where he said:

"As for the two that are not permissible for Him: when someone

2. Qur'an, 39:4
3. *Al-Mīzān*, 6/88-89, summarized

says 'one' meaning it in terms of numbers, this is not permissible because that which has no second cannot enter into the category of numbers. Do you not see that those who said He is the third of three were deemed unbelievers? And when someone says He is one of the people, meaning a type of genus, this is not permissible because it is comparison, and our Lord is far exalted above that."

As for the two that are established for Him, they are: the simplicity of His essence and His having no equal or peer, where he said:

"As for the two aspects that are established for Him: when someone says He is one meaning He has no likeness among things... and that He, mighty and majestic, is singular in meaning... not divisible in existence, intellect, or imagination...".[4]

The Doctrine of Trinity According to Christians

The writings of Christians in their theological books indicate that belief in the Trinity (*tathlīth*) is one of the fundamental issues upon which their doctrine is built, and no Christian can avoid believing in it. At the same time, they consider themselves monotheists, not polytheists, and that God, while being one, is three, and while being three is also one.

The most they can offer to explain the reconciliation of these two contradictions is that the doctrine of Trinity is purely a devotional belief (*'aqīda ta'abbudiyya*), and there is no way to deny or prove it except through revelation, as it is beyond sensory experiences and the limited rational perceptions of humans.

Critique of this Theory

This theory can be critiqued on the grounds that the doctrine of Trinity, as explained above, contains clear contradictions. On one hand, they define each of the three divine persons as distinct and separate

4. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 3, Hadith 3

from the others, while at the same time considering them all to be literally, not metaphorically, one. How can one believe in something that contradicts basic reason and then attribute it to divine revelation?

Furthermore, we ask: What do you mean by the three divine persons that constitute the single divine nature? This can take two forms, neither of which is befitting of God's essence:

1. That each of these three divine persons has an independent existence from the others, such that each manifests in its own distinct form and existence, and each of these hypostases (*aqānīm*) has an independent origin and unique personality distinguishing it from the others.

However, this amounts to believing in multiple necessarily existent deities, and you have already encountered the proofs of God's oneness.

2. That the three hypostases exist as one being, making God a composite of these three elements. This amounts to claiming that the Necessary Being is composite, but as you will recall, we have already established the simplicity of His essence.[5]

The Infiltration of the Trinity Myth into Christianity

Human history shows us that followers of prophets have often turned to polytheism (*shirk*) and idolatry (*wathaniyya*) after their prophets'

5. If you say: There is another interpretation of the Trinity, which is that the single Divine Reality manifests in three hypostases. I say: The manifestation of that Reality in them has only two possibilities: First, that it becomes three essences each possessing the perfection of Divine Reality, which contradicts essential monotheism. Second, that there is one essence possessing the perfection of Divinity with attributive and active manifestations including Christ and the Holy Spirit. While this is correct, it has nothing to do with the Trinity that Christians adopt.

death or during their absence, under the influence of misleading individuals. The worship of the calf by the Children of Israel during Moses's (a.s.) absence is the clearest example of this, as confirmed by both the Qur'an and history. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the myth of Trinity infiltrating Christian doctrine after Jesus Christ (a.s.) departed from his followers.

The Qur'an explicitly states that Trinity entered Christianity after Christ's ascension, from previous mythological beliefs, where God says:

"And the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of God. That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before. May God destroy them; how are they deluded!"[6]

Historical research has proven that this Trinity existed in Brahmanical and Hindu religions hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus Christ, where the eternal Lord manifested in three aspects and deities:

1. Brahma (the Creator)
2. Vishnu (the Preserver)
3. Shiva (the Destroyer)

This confirms the strength of what the French philosopher "Gustave Le Bon" stated:

"Christianity continued its evolution in the first five centuries of its existence, adopting what was available from Greek and Eastern philosophical and religious concepts. Thus, it became a mixture of Egyptian and Iranian beliefs that spread throughout European regions around the first century CE. People embraced a new trinity composed of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in place of the old trinity consisting of 'Nerupy Ter,' 'Waznun,' and 'Neru.'"[7]

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6. Qur'an, 9:30
7. *The Story of Civilization*, Will Durant, 3/770

7

UNITY IN DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Theologians have differed on how to apply God's essential attributes to Him falling into two positions:

The First: The attributes are identical with the Divine Essence. This was adopted by the Imams of the Household (a.s.) and chosen by divine philosophers, and it is the position of the majority of theologians from the Imami, Mu'tazilite, and other schools.

The Second: The attributes are additional to the Divine Essence. This is the choice of the Anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*) among the attributists and the Ash'aris. Shaykh al-Mufīd said in this regard:

"God, mighty and exalted be His name, is living through His essence not through a [separate] life, and He is powerful through His essence and knowing through His essence, not through [additional] meanings as claimed by the Anthropomorphists among the attributists... This is the doctrine of all Imamis and the Mu'tazilites except those we named[1], and most Murji'ites, the majority of Zaydis, and a group of the traditionists and arbitrators."[2] His statement "not through a life" means not through a life additional to the essence,

1. Referring to Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī
2. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, 56

and "not through meanings" refers to additional attributes like knowledge and power.

Know that having understood this, the correct position is that of identity, for the position of addition necessitates that the Glorified would need things external to His essence for knowing things and creating them. Thus He would know through knowledge that is other than His essence, and create through power that is external to His reality, and so on. Yet the Necessarily Existent by Essence is above needing anything other than His essence. Although the Ash'aris maintain the eternality of attributes while being additional to the essence, eternality does not remove poverty and need from Him, because correlation is not the same as identity. Moreover, the addition of attributes to the essence necessitates duality and composition. Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

"The perfection of sincerity to Him is to negate attributes from Him, for every attribute testifies that it is other than the described, and every described testifies that it is other than the attribute. So whoever describes God the Glorified has paired Him, and whoever pairs Him has made Him two, and whoever makes Him two has divided Him, and whoever divides Him is ignorant of Him."[3]

If you say: There is no doubt that God the Exalted has different attributes and names that were enumerated in the well-known prophetic tradition as ninety-nine[4], so how can this be reconciled with the position of identity and the unity of essence and attributes?

I say: The multiplicity of names and attributes pertains to the conceptual realm, while identity relates to the realm of concrete reality. There is no impossibility in something being at such a level of perfection that it is entirely knowledge, power, and life, while at the same time various different attributes can be abstracted from it through different considerations. This is similar to how an actual human being, for instance, in their entire existence is created by God the Glorified, known to Him, and under His power, without one part

3. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, First Sermon
4. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 29, Hadith 8

being specifically known, another part being created, or another part being under His power. Rather, the whole is known, the whole is created, and the whole is under His power.

Furthermore, Shaykh al-Ash'arī argued for the theory of addition by saying that it is impossible for knowledge to be knowing, or for the knower to be knowledge. It is known that God is knowing, and whoever says His knowledge is identical with His essence cannot correctly say He is knowing. Therefore, it is established that He is knowing through knowledge that cannot possibly be identical with Himself.[5] The objection to this is that the judgment that knowledge and the knower cannot be united and identical is derived from what we know about humans and similar contingent beings. There is no doubt about the distinction between essence and attribute in this domain, but this cannot be extended to the Necessarily Existent by Essence. When proof is established for identity in this case, there is no impossibility in knowledge being knowing and vice versa.

The Ash'aris have other proofs to establish their theory, but all are flawed, as acknowledged by the author of *al-Mawāqif*.[6] Furthermore, it is commonly held that the Mu'tazilites completely deny attributes and maintain that the essence substitutes for attributes, but this has no basis. What they deny are additional eternal attributes, not attributes themselves. They maintain identity like the Imamis, as evidenced by the aforementioned statement of Shaykh al-Mufīd. Yes, the position of substitution appears in the works of 'Abbād ibn Sulaymān and Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī.[7]

5. *Al-Luma'*, 30, abridged
6. See: *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/45-47
7. To understand their views in this field, see *Buḥūth fī al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* by Shaykh Sobhani, 3/271-279

8

DIVINE UNITY IN CREATION

Reason clearly indicates that there is no original creator in the universe except God the Glorified, and that contingent beings are created by God the Exalted, along with their consequent actions and effects, including humans and what emanates from them. All of these are attributed to Him the Glorified without metaphor or qualification. The ultimate point is that everything in the universe is created by Him either directly or through causation.

This is because, as you have learned, He the Glorified is the Necessarily Existent and Self-Sufficient, while everything else is contingent in essence. It is inconceivable that something contingent could be self-sufficient in its essence and actions independent of the Necessary Being. Just as its essence subsists through God the Glorified, so too does its action, and this is what is expressed as divine unity in creation (*tawḥīd fī l-khāliqiyya*). For one who truly understands contingency and that it is utterly devoid of everything in itself, this matter becomes self-evident.

This is what reason indicates, and as for transmitted evidence, the Qur'anic texts are abundant in affirming that God the Glorified is the Creator, and there is no creator besides Him. Here are some examples

of verses concerning this matter:

"Say: God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Supreme".[1]

"God is the Creator of all things, and He is the Guardian over all things".[2]

"That is God, your Lord, Creator of all things; there is no deity except Him".[3]

"How can He have a child when He has no consort and He created all things".[4]

"O mankind! Remember God's favor upon you. Is there any creator other than God?".[5]

And there are many other Qur'anic verses indicating this.

The Position of the Qur'an Regarding the Law of Causality

Close examination of the noble verses leads one to conclude that the divine book acknowledges that the contingent system is a system of causes and effects. Anyone who contemplates the wise revelation cannot doubt that it frequently attributes effects to external objects and material things, such as the sky and its planets and stars, the earth and its mountains, seas, wilderness, elements and minerals, clouds, thunder, lightning, thunderbolts, water, plants, trees, animals, and humans, among other subjects mentioned in the Qur'an. Whoever denies that the Qur'an attributes the effects of these things to themselves only denies it verbally while their heart is certain of the opposite. Here are some examples of verses in this regard:

"And He sent down water from the sky and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you".[6] This verse explicitly states the effect of water in forming fruits and plants, as the preposition "by" (*bi*) in His

1. Qur'an, 13:16
2. Qur'an, 39:62
3. Qur'an, 40:62
4. Qur'an, 6:101
5. Qur'an, 35:3
6. Qur'an, 2:22

saying "thereby" indicates causation. Similar verses include verse 27 of *Sūrat al-Sajda* and verse 4 of *Sūrat al-Ra'd*, among others.

"God is He who sends the winds, and they stir up clouds, and He spreads them in the sky however He wills".[7]

His saying the Glorified "and they stir up clouds" explicitly shows that winds move the clouds and drive them from one side to another, so winds are formative causes and reasons for the movement of clouds and their spreading in the sky.

"And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows every delightful kind".[8]

The verse explicitly states the effect of water in making the earth quiver and swell, then explicitly states that the earth grows every delightful kind.

"The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of God is like a grain that produces seven spikes".[9]

The verse attributes the growth of seven spikes to the grain.

Furthermore, there are actions that the Qur'an attributes to humans that can only be performed by them and cannot be correctly attributed to God the Glorified directly and without intermediary, such as eating, drinking, walking, sitting, marriage, growth, understanding, feeling, joy, prayer, and fasting. These are actions that subsist in humans and are attributed to them, for it is they who eat, drink, grow, and understand.

The Qur'an considers humans to be the agents (*fā'il*) of these actions and their cause.

Moreover, the Qur'an contains verses that include divine commands and prohibitions, and indicate His recompense for those commands and prohibitions. If humans had no role in this domain and no influence over obedience and disobedience, what would be the purpose of commanding and prohibiting, and what would be the meaning of reward and punishment?

7. Qur'an, 30:48
8. Qur'an, 22:5
9. Qur'an, 2:261

The Correct Explanation of Divine Unity in Creation

The intended meaning of restricting creation to God the Exalted is creation that is independent and essential, while creation that is permitted by Him does not contradict divine unity in creation. Similarly, contingent causation (whether natural or otherwise) is not parallel to divine causation. Rather, the meaning is that there is a fixed system in the universe through which natural effects and human actions operate. Everything has its specific natural effect, just as every effect and action has its specific agent principle. Not every agent is the source of every action, just as not every action and effect emanates from every agent principle. All of this occurs by His permission for He is the one who gave fire its causative property just as He gave it existence. Thus it affects by His permission and determination. This is the general law of causality that operates in the cosmic system, which is supported by sense and experience and upon which human life is built in terms of knowledge and action.

This explanation resolves the apparent contradiction between two groups of Qur'anic verses: those indicating that creation is restricted to God the Exalted, and those indicating the validity of the law of cause and effect and the attribution of effects to their immediate causes. Evidence for the correctness of this reconciliation comes from verses that attribute effects to specific cosmic causes while simultaneously attributing them to God and likewise attribute certain actions to humans or other beings with knowledge and consciousness while simultaneously attributing those same actions to His will, glory be to Him. Here are some examples from this group:

The Qur'an attributes the movement of clouds to the winds, saying: "God is He who sends the winds, and they stir up clouds".[10]

It also attributes it to God the Exalted, saying: "Do you not see that God drives clouds, then joins them together, then makes them into a mass?".[11]

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10. Qur'an, 30:48
11. Qur'an, 24:43

The Qur'an sometimes attributes plant growth to the seed, saying: "It produced seven ears [of grain]".[12]

And at other times attributes it to God the Exalted, saying: "And He sent down water from the sky, and with it We produced gardens full of beauty".[13]

He the Exalted attributes the taking of souls at death sometimes to the angels and other times to Himself, saying: "Until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers take him".[14]

And He says: "God takes the souls at the time of their death".[15]

The Qur'an describes Him as the one who records the deeds of His servants, saying: "And God writes down what they plot by night".[16]

Yet at the same time, He attributes the recording to His messengers, saying: "Yes indeed, Our messengers are recording".[17]

There is no doubt that governance, like creation, is restricted to God the Exalted, and the Qur'an elicits this acknowledgment from the polytheists, saying: "And who governs all affairs? They will say: God".[18]

Yet - despite this - it explicitly affirms the governance of other than God where it says: "By those who govern affairs".[19]

The Qur'an refers to both attributions (that is, attributing the action to God and to humans) in one statement, saying: "And you did not throw when you threw, but it was God who threw".[20]

It describes the Greatest Prophet (s.a.w.) as truly throwing and attributes it to him, saying: "when you threw," yet at the same time negates it from him and considers God as the true thrower.

This group of verses guides you to the true theory in explaining

12. Qur'an, 2:261
13. Qur'an, 27:60
14. Qur'an, 6:61
15. Qur'an, 39:42
16. Qur'an, 4:81
17. Qur'an, 43:80
18. Qur'an, 10:31
19. Qur'an, 79:5
20. Qur'an, 8:17

divine unity in creation, which is - as previously mentioned - that creation in terms of independence is restricted to Him while other cosmic causes and conscious agents are only effective and active by His permission and will, and their causation and agency are not parallel to His agency, but rather subordinate to it.

Answering Objections

You have learned that His creation encompasses all things and events, and everything in existence depends on Him, glory be to Him. At this point, certain problems or objections arise that the theologian must address, namely:

a. The dualist objection regarding the creation of evil;
b. The objection about attributing reprehensible acts to God the Exalted;
c. The objection of determinism in voluntary actions.

The Dualists and the Problem of Cosmic Evil

The dualists (*thanawiyya*) are attributed with claiming multiple creators, using as evidence the evils and afflictions observed in the material world. They said: Evil is the opposite of good, so they cannot both originate from a single source. Thus, they claimed there are two principles: one for good things, and another for evil things.

The answer to this comes in two ways:

1. Evil is Relative

When there is a phenomenon that has no close connection to human life, or its connection does not lead to any disruption in life, it is not characterized as evil or affliction. Something is only characterized as evil when it causes some kind of disruption to human life that leads to the destruction of oneself or what is related to or harmful to oneself in some way.

It is known that this relationship and attribution comes after the existence of that being or event. If the phenomenon occurred without

considering the comparison and attribution, it would only be characterized as good, meaning that the existence of everything is suitable to its essence. Talk of evil only comes when there is a comparison to another being. When you understand this, know that what is attributed to the Creator first and essentially is its independent existence, and it is assumed that the existence of both the compared and that which is being compared to are not characterized by evil and affliction, but rather by good and perfection. As for the relative existence derived from comparing one phenomenon with another, it is not a real thing needing a principle to bring it about.[21]

2. Evil is Privational

There is another analysis of this objection, which is what was reported from Plato, and its conclusion is: What is called evil among events and occurrences, upon analysis, returns to privation. What is called evil in the occurrence of killing is nothing but the cessation of bodily life arising from the severance of the soul's connection to the body. What is called evil in the occurrence of illness is nothing but the disruption in the body's systems and the disappearance of what was present during health in terms of natural balance in bodily organs and systems.

The same applies to other events characterized by affliction and evil.

It is known that what needs an effusive agent is existence, while non-existence has no share of reality that would need a creative principle. To this, the sage al-Sabzawārī pointed in his philosophical poem:

"Evil is non-existence, so how misguided is one who speaks of Yazdān and then Ahriman"[22]

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21. The wise Sabzawārī pointed to what we mentioned by saying: "Every existence, even if contingent, is good in itself and good in relation to others. This relation has two types: first, its relation to its cause, for every effect is compatible with its necessitating cause; second, its relation to what benefits from it at its level. In this second relation, some evil may occur in certain perishable things at rare times." *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*: Purpose 3, Unique Point 1, Notes on Refuting the Dualist Misconception.

22. 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī said: Evil only manifests in material matters and is attributed to the deficiency of capacities in their various degrees, not to the emanation of the

Divine Unity in Creation and the Problem of Moral Evil

It might be said: Committing to the universality of God's creation of everything necessitates attributing reprehensible acts to Him, which contradicts His being free from all defects and blemishes.

The answer is that actions have two aspects: the aspect of existence and being, and the aspect of their attribution to their immediate agents. The characterization of obedience and disobedience is derived from the second aspect, while what is attributed to God is the first aspect. Actions, from this perspective, are characterized by beauty and goodness, meaning ontological goodness.

In other words: The characterization of good and evil that applies to actions emanating from a conscious and free agent is what practical reason perceives in terms of actions' conformity or non-conformity with the dictates of reason and religious law. This goodness and evil returns to the immediate agent of the action.

Yes, the basic existence of the action - setting aside its comparison to the judgment of reason or religious law - is attributed to God and ends with His will. The action, in this consideration, is not characterized by reprehensibility, for it is existence, and existence is inherently good and beautiful.

God says: "Who perfected everything He created".[23]

And He says: "God is the Creator of all things".[24]

Thus, everything, just as it is created, is good. Creation and goodness are inseparable companions, one never parting from the other.

As for answering the objection of compulsion based on the view

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source of existence, for the cause of non-existence is non-existence, just as the cause of existence is existence. What is connected to the word of creation and divine will, and what is encompassed by divine decree in matters accompanied by some evil, is only the degree of existence it assumes according to its capacity and receptivity. As for the non-existence that accompanies it, it is only attributed to its lack of receptivity and deficient capacity. Yes, creation and emanation are attributed to it accidentally due to a kind of unity between it and the existence that accompanies it. *Al-Mīzān*: 13/187-188 with slight modification.

23. Qur'an, 32:7

24. Qur'an, 39:62

of universal creation, its explanation will come to you in the chapter dedicated to that topic.

9

DIVINE UNITY IN LORDSHIP

It is understood from the Qur'an that the polytheists agreed on Divine Unity in creation. God says: "If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will surely say 'God'".[1] And similarly in *Sūrat al-Zumar*, verse 38.

And the Exalted says: "If you ask them who created them, they will surely say 'God.' How then are they deluded?"[2]

As for the matter of Divine Unity in governance (*tadbīr*), this was not something they accepted. Rather, polytheism in governance was widespread among the pagans, just as the worshippers of planets and stars in the time of the champion of monotheism, Ibrahim (a.s.), were among those who committed polytheism in matters of governance. They believed that the celestial bodies were the controllers of the lower system of the world and that the governance of the universe, including humankind, was delegated to them. Thus, they considered them lords of this world and its administrators, though not its creators. For this reason, we find Ibrahim refuting their lordship by pointing to their setting and disappearance. The Exalted says,

1. Qur'an, 31:25
2. Qur'an, 43:87

relating his story: "When the night covered him, he saw a star. He said, 'This is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those that set.' When he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I will surely be among the people gone astray.' When he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my lord; this is greater.' But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with God'".[3]

You can see that he (a.s.) used the word "lord" (*rabb*) in his argument with the polytheists, and did not use the word "creator" (*khāliq*), due to the clear difference between the two types of monotheism and their non-denial of monotheism in the first while insisting on polytheism in the second.[4]

The Reality of Lordship and Divine Unity Therein

The word "lord" (*rabb*) in the Arabic language means one who controls, manages, and undertakes the nurturing of something. The reality of governance (*tadbīr*) is the organization and coordination of things in such a way that each achieves its desired objective and attains its intended goal. Therefore, the reality of His governance is nothing but the creation of the universe and the establishment of causes and effects such that effects and consequences follow their causes, with parts of the universe influencing other parts until each entity reaches its appropriate perfection and desired goal. The Exalted says: "Our Lord is He who gave everything its creation, then guided it".[5]

Divine Unity in lordship (*rubūbiyya*) is the belief that the governance of the contingent world is in God's hands and that all cosmic

3. Qur'an, 6:76-78

4. Although the polytheists during the time of the Message acknowledged His lordship regarding the overall management of the world's system, as understood from verse 31 of Sūrat Yūnus and similar verses, they believed in the lordship of the deities they worshipped, as indicated by some Qur'anic verses, like verse 74 of Sūrat Yāsīn and verse 81 of Sūrat Maryam.

5. Qur'an, 20:50

causes and effects are His soldiers acting by His command and operating according to His will. The Qur'an explicitly states that there are administrators of the world's affairs by His permission, glory be to Him. He says: "And those who govern by command".[6]

Its opposite is polytheism in lordship, which is the notion that there are creatures of God to whom He has delegated the governance of the universe and human destiny in both its existential and legislative aspects.

Here there is an important point that must be noted: paganism did not believe in the lordship of stone and wooden idols and the like. Rather, they believed these were images of the deities who governed this universe. Since these supposed deities were not within their reach, and since worshipping an entity beyond sensory perception was difficult to conceive, they resorted to embodying these deities and depicting them in idols and statues of wood and stone, worshipping these instead of their supposed true owners, the alleged deities.

Evidence for Divine Unity in Lordship

1. The Governance of the Universe is Inseparable from Creation

The fundamental error in the polytheists' thinking lies in their equating the governance of the universe with the management of a family or institution, imagining them to be of the same kind, when in fact they are fundamentally different. The governance of the universe is, in reality, the perpetuation of creation and bringing into existence.

To clarify: Each individual entity in the cosmic system, by virtue of being inherently dependent and contingent, lacks independent existence. However, this dependence is not limited to the beginning of its creation but continues throughout its existence. Therefore, the governance of the universe is inseparable from its creation and bringing into existence - governance is continuous creation.

For example, the governance of a rose is nothing but its formation

6. Qur'an, 79:5

from sugary substances in the soil, then its production of oxygen in the air, and dozens of other physical and chemical processes within itself. Each of these is but a branch of creation. Similarly, from the moment an embryo forms in the mother's womb, it undergoes processes of interaction and growth until it emerges, and these interactions are nothing but branches and aspects of the creative process.

2. The Harmony of the System and Continuity of Governance

Examining any page of the great book of creation leads us to recognize the existence of a unified system and strong interconnection between its parts. It is evident that the unity, harmony, and coherence of the system can only be achieved if the entire universe is under the oversight of a single ruler and governor. If the universe were subject to the will of multiple governors, there would be no trace of connected governance and harmony between the parts of the universe, because multiple governors and organizers - by virtue of their differences in essence or in attributes and characteristics - necessarily entails differences in governance and will, which contradicts the harmony and coherence in the parts of the universe.

Thus, the unity and harmony of the system reveals the unity of governance and governor. This is what is indicated by His words, glory be to Him: "If there had been in them gods besides God, they would both have been corrupted".[7]

This same reasoning is found in the traditions narrated from the Imams of the Household (a.s.). Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) says: "The soundness of the affair and governance, and the harmony of the matter, indicate that the governor is one".[8] When Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam asked him: "What is the evidence that God is one?"

He (a.s.) replied: "The continuity of governance and perfection of creation, as God, the Mighty and Majestic, said: 'If there had been in them gods besides God, they would both have been corrupted'".[9]

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7. Qur'an, 21:22
8. *Tawḥīd al-Ṣadūq*: Chapter 36, Hadith 1
9. Qur'an, 21:22

Manifestations of Divine Unity in Lordship

Divine unity in lordship (*tawḥīd fī l-rubūbiyya*) encompasses a vast scope that includes all cosmic phenomena and existential realities. There is no inherently independent governor in the realm of existence except God. He is the Lord of the worlds, and there is no lord besides Him.

At the conclusion of this discussion, we should point to three categories that have special importance in human social life, which are:

1. Divine Unity in Governance

The governor is one who has authority over lives and property, and manages society's affairs through commands and prohibitions, dismissal and appointment, restriction and expansion, and similar matters. It is known that this requires authority (*wilāya*) in relation to those under control, without which such management would be considered transgressive. This is one aspect.

From another aspect, authority over others stems from the governor either being the owner of those governed or the manager of their affairs in life. Since no one has ownership over others except God the Exalted, and there is no manager besides Him - for He is the Creator who brings all into existence and manages the entire universe - no one inherently has authority over another except God the Exalted. Thus, the right of authority is exclusively God's.

The Exalted says: "Or have they taken protectors besides Him? But God - He is the Protector".[10]

And the Exalted says: "The judgment is for none but God. He relates the truth, and He is the best of judges".[11]

From a third aspect: the existence of government and human governors in society is necessary, as Imam Ali (a.s.) indicated in his

10. Qur'an, 42:9
11. Qur'an, 6:57

statement: "People must have a leader, whether righteous or wicked".[12] It is known that the exercise of leadership and the embodiment of government in the external world is not the role of the Exalted Himself, but rather the role of one who is of the same kind as those being governed, who can directly address them and interact with them as one human to another. Therefore, the way to reconcile between the exclusivity of governance to God the Exalted and the necessity of the governor being human like those governed, is that whoever occupies the position of leadership must be authorized by the Exalted to manage affairs and have authority over lives and property, and that their authority must be derived from and originate in His authority.

Accordingly, governments established in societies must derive their legitimacy from His authority and rule in some way. If their connection to the Exalted is severed and not maintained, they are tyrannical governments (*ṭāghūtiyya*) with no legitimacy.

2. Divine Unity in Obedience

There is no doubt that among the affairs of the ruler and guardian is the obligation of obedience upon the ruled and those under guardianship, for governance without the obligation to obey the ruler becomes meaningless. It has been established that the inherent ruler is none other than God the Exalted.

Therefore, there is no one inherently deserving of obedience except Him. As for others besides Him, since they have no authority or governance over anyone except by His permission and through their governance being derived from His governance, they have no right to be obeyed except in this way.

The Exalted says: "And We did not send any messenger except to be obeyed by permission of God".[13]

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12. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Sermon 40
13. Qur'an, 4:64

And the Glorified says: "Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed God".[14]

3. Divine Unity in Legislation

Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) is of two types: creative (*takwīniyya*) and legislative (*tashrī'iyya*). The proofs for divine unity in creative lordship also establish divine unity in legislative lordship, for legislation and lawmaking are a type of governance by which human and societal affairs are managed. It is also a type of governance and authority over property and lives. Since governance and authority are confined to God the Exalted, likewise no one has the right to legislate and make laws except Him.

As for the jurists (*fuqahā'*) and scholars of independent reasoning (*mujtahidūn*), they are not legislators, but rather specialists in understanding His legislation. Their role is to uncover the rulings by referring to their sources and making them accessible to people.

As for what has become customary in recent centuries regarding the establishment of parliamentary or consultative councils in Islamic countries, their only function is planning to provide programs for government officials in light of divine laws for implementation. Planning is clearly different from legislation.

The Qur'an considers any legislation that does not conform to divine ruling and law to be disbelief, oppression, and transgression. The Glorified says:

"And whoever does not judge by what God has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers".[15]

"And whoever does not judge by what God has revealed - then it is those who are the oppressors".[16]

"And whoever does not judge by what God has revealed - then it is those who are the transgressors".[17]

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14. Qur'an, 4:80
15. Qur'an, 5:44
16. Qur'an, 5:45
17. Qur'an, 5:47

10

DIVINE UNITY IN WORSHIP

Divine unity in worship is the highest goal and purpose for which prophets and messengers were sent. The Glorified says:

"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship God and avoid false deities (*ṭāghūt*)".[1]

Sufficient to demonstrate its importance is that Islam established it as a motto for Muslims, which they affirm in their obligatory and recommended prayers by saying:

"You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help".[2]

The Prophet's (s.a.w.) struggle, and indeed that of all prophets, against idolaters primarily focused on this point, as is evident to anyone who examines the Qur'an.

You will not find a Muslim who denies or doubts this principle. The discussion rather concerns the true nature of worship and its manifestations. We see that followers of Wahhabism accuse others of polytheism in worship for seeking blessings through prophets' relics and seeking their intercession with God, and similar practices. Thus,

1. Qur'an, 16:36
2. Qur'an, 1:5

distinguishing worship from other acts is the only problem in this area. Before anything else, we must study the true nature of worship in light of reason, the Qur'an, and tradition (*sunna*). So we ask: What is the true nature of worship?

Worship in language means submission and humility, and it is said to be the ultimate form of submission and humility.[3] However, this linguistic meaning is not what is meant by worship that is exclusive to God the Exalted.

To clarify: The Qur'an commands humans to be humble toward their parents, saying:

"And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up when I was small'".[4]

If submission and humility were worship of the one to whom one submits, then God's command for this would be a command to take partners with Him in worship!

Similarly, He commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam, saying: "And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam,' they prostrated, except for Iblis".[5]

Even though prostration is the ultimate form of submission and humility to the one prostrated to, would you think that God commands the angels to commit polytheism in worship?!

Indeed, Joseph's brothers and parents all prostrated to him after he was established on the throne of kingship and authority, as the Glorified says:

"And they fell down to him in prostration".[6]

Therefore, the meaning of worship that is exclusive to God the Glorified and not permissible for others is not merely submission and humility, or even the ultimate form of submission. So what is the true nature of worship?

The true nature of worship - as understood from the Qur'an - is

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3. *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*: 319; *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*: 1/13
4. Qur'an, 17:24
5. Qur'an, 2:34
6. Qur'an, 12:100

"submission and humility, whether verbal or practical, accompanied by the belief that the one being submitted to is the Creator, Lord, and Master, and that these are divine attributes." We see that in *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*, before specifying worship as exclusive to God the Exalted, He is described as the Lord of the worlds, Master of the Day of Judgment, and that He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. Similarly says:

"That is God, your Lord; there is no deity except Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him".[7]

Submission to God the Exalted only becomes worship because He is the Creator and Lord, the Master and Deity, and the exclusivity of these attributes to God the Exalted necessitates the exclusivity of worship to Him.

In summary: Any submission that stems from the belief that the one being submitted to is the deity of the universe or its lord, or that the management of all or part of the universe has been delegated to them, becomes worship even in its lowest form. Its practitioner becomes a polytheist in worship if they direct it to other than God. This contrasts with submission that does not stem from such belief. Thus, someone's submission to a being and honoring them - even excessively - without stemming from belief in their divinity, is neither polytheism nor worship of that being, though it may be forbidden, like a lover's prostration to their beloved, or a wife's prostration to her husband. While this is forbidden in Islamic law, it is not worship but rather forbidden for another reason. Perhaps the reason for its prohibition is that since prostration is a universal means of worship among all peoples and religions, it has come to be understood only as worship. Therefore, Islam did not permit its use even in cases that would not constitute worship. This prohibition is specific to Islamic law, as it was not forbidden before it - otherwise Jacob and his sons would not have prostrated to Joseph (a.s.). The Mighty and Majestic

7. Qur'an, 6:102

says: "And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they fell down before him in prostration".[8]

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ said: Prostration to created beings was permissible in the law of Adam (a.s.), and it seems to have continued until the time of Joseph (a.s.)... However, prostration to other than God as a form of honor and greeting was abrogated according to what ʿĀʾisha, Jābir, and Anas reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "It is not appropriate for any human to prostrate to another human. If it were appropriate for any human to prostrate to another, I would have commanded a wife to prostrate to her husband due to the magnitude of his right over her".[9]

The Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh pointed to what we mentioned about the true nature of worship that is exclusive to God the Exalted - that it is nothing but a specific submission stemming from the belief in the divinity of the one being submitted to and that they possess the attributes of lordship and creation - when he said: The correct Arabic styles and explicit usage indicate that worship is a form of submission that reaches its ultimate extent, arising from the heart's sense of the greatness of the worshipped one whose source it cannot comprehend, and belief in an authority whose essence and nature it cannot grasp. The most it can know about it is that it encompasses it while being beyond its comprehension. Thus, one who reaches the utmost humility before a king is not said to worship him, even if they kiss the place of his feet, as long as the cause of humility and submission is known, such as fear of his known oppression or hope for his limited generosity.[10]

A Note on Displays of Respect

Based on what we have discussed, kissing the hand of the Prophet, Imam, teacher, or parents, or kissing the Qur'an or religious books, or

8. Qur'an, 12:100
9. *Aḥkām al-Qur'an*, 1/32
10. *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 1/56-57; see also *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 1/32

the shrines of saints and their relics, is merely veneration and honor, not worship. This clarifies that many of the matters that the Wahhābī group considers worship of other than God and polytheism are not categorically correct. These actions only become polytheism and worship if the one being submitted to is attributed with divinity and it is believed that creation, management, giving life and death, provision, and other aspects of absolute divinity have been delegated to them, or if there is a belief that they control the fate of servants in their worldly and afterlife affairs. However, if these actions are done to honor God's saints, they are rationally and religiously commendable, as they are means of expressing love and affection for the righteous among God's servants, which necessarily pleases Him, glory be to Him.

PART III

ON HIS ATTRIBUTES

11

CLASSIFYING THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Theologians have proposed several different schema for classifying His attributes:

The Beautiful and Majestic Attributes

When an attribute affirms beauty and indicates a reality in His essence, it is called "affirmative" (*thubūtiyya*) or "beautiful" (*jamāliyya*). When an attribute aims to negate deficiency and need from Him it is called "negative" (*salbiyya*) or "majestic" (*jalāliyya*).

Knowledge, power, and life are among the affirmative attributes that indicate the existence of perfection and reality in the Divine Essence. However, the negation of corporeality, spatial occupation, movement, and change are among the negative attributes that aim to negate what is deficient from His presence.

Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said: "These two terms (beautiful and majestic) are close to what is mentioned in the Noble Book. The Glorified said: 'Blessed is the name of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor'".[1]

1. Qur'an, 55:78

"The attribute of majesty is that which elevates His essence above resemblance to others, and the attribute of honor is that with which His essence is honored and beautified. Thus He is described with perfection and sanctified with majesty".[2]

Attributes of Essence and Attributes of Action

The theologians divided His attributes into attributes of essence and attributes of action. The first are those for which only the essence itself needs to be supposed to describe the essence with them, such as power, life, and knowledge. The second are those where describing the essence depends on supposing His action.

The attributes of action are those derived from the station of action, meaning that the essence is described with these attributes when considering it along with the action, such as creation, provision, and their like among the active attributes that are additional to the essence by virtue of their being derived from the station of action.

Real and Relational Attributes

The attributes have another classification, which is their division into real and relational. What is meant by the first is that which truly describes the essence, and these are either real with a relation, like knowledge and power, or purely real, like life. The relational are the derived attributes like being knower, being powerful, being creator, being provider, and being cause.

Essential and Revealed Attributes

Some theologians have divided His attributes into essential (*dhātiyya*) and revealed (*khabariyya*). The first refers to His known attributes like knowledge, power, and life, while the second refers to those attributes mentioned in divine revelation from the Qur'an and Tradition,

2. *Al-Asfār*, 6/118

which would not have been attributed to God based on reason alone. These include His being established on the throne, and His having a face, hands, and eyes, along with other such expressions found in the Qur'an or hadith which, if applied to God the Glorified in their commonly understood meanings, would necessitate anthropomorphism and comparison.

12

WAYS OF KNOWING HIS ATTRIBUTES

There are three valid ways to know God's attributes:

First: The Rational Way

There are two aspects to the rational way of understanding His attributes:

The First Aspect: Pure rational reasoning, for which it is sufficient to establish that He is necessarily existent by essence. Through causal reasoning, all His beautiful and majestic attributes can be proven.

The renowned Muslim theologian Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī followed this path to demonstrate many majestic and beautiful attributes, saying:

"The necessity of existence indicates His eternality, and the negation of additions, partners, similars, composition in all its meanings, opposites, spatial occupation, incarnation, union, direction, the occurrence of temporal events in Him, need, pain in general, physical pleasure, meanings, states, additional attributes, and vision, and it

establishes generosity, sovereignty, perfection, truth, goodness, wisdom, might, dominance, and self-subsistence".[1]

The Second Aspect: Observing the universe around us and its marvelous order, which reveals through empirical evidence a vast knowledge and absolute power aware of all hidden particularities within it and all laws governing creation. Through this way – observing the universe – humans can be guided to many of the beautiful attributes of the universe's originator and creator. The Noble Book commands following this path, as the Glorified says:

"Say: Look at what is in the heavens and the earth".[2]

And the Glorified says:

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for those who possess understanding".[3]

And the Glorified says:

"Indeed, in the alternation of night and day and what God has created in the heavens and earth are signs for people who are mindful".[4]

Second: The Way of Divine Revelation

The second way to know God's attributes is through divine revelation (*waḥy*) to God's prophets and what has been narrated from the divinely guided infallible ones (a.s.). This is after establishing His existence and some of His attributes, and after we have verified that the prophets were sent by God and are truthful in their statements and words.

In brief, through revelation - which is free from error and mistake - we learn about the qualities and aspects of the Supreme Origin. Among these is His saying:

"He is God, besides whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the

1. *Kashf al-Murād*, Third Purpose, Second Chapter, Issue, 7-21
2. Qur'an, 10:101
3. Qur'an, 3:190
4. Qur'an, 10:6

Holy, the Peace, the Faithful, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Glory be to God above what they associate with Him. He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise".[5]

This is in addition to other Qur'anic verses and hadiths narrated through reliable chains from the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his infallible household (a.s.).

Third: The Way of Unveiling and Witnessing

A small group of people witness with the eyes of their hearts what cannot be perceived with physical sight. They see His beauty, majesty, attributes, and actions through a spiritual perception that can be experienced by those who attain it but cannot be described to others. The inner openings (*futūḥāt*) through spiritual unveilings (*mukāshafāt*) or spiritual witnessing (*mushāhadāt*) and divine inspirations (*ilqā 'āt*) in the heart are not closed off, as confirmed by the text of the Noble Book.

The Glorified said: "O you who believe! If you fear God, He will grant you a criterion".[6]

That is, He will place in your hearts a light by which you distinguish between truth and falsehood, and differentiate between the authentic and the spurious, not through proof and reasoning but through witnessing (*shuhūd*) and unveiling (*mukāshafa*).

And the Glorified said: "O you who believe! Fear God and believe in His Messenger, He will give you a double portion of His mercy, and make for you a light by which you shall walk, and forgive you; and God is Forgiving, Merciful".[7]

The intended meaning of light here is that by which the believer walks throughout their life in their worldly affairs and in matters of

5. Qur'an, 59:22-23
6. Qur'an, 8:29
7. Qur'an, 57:28

the hereafter, in their religion and their worldly life.[8] And the Glorified said: "Those who strive in Our cause, We will surely guide them to Our paths".[9]

There are other verses that clearly show that the believer can reach knowledge and truths through spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*) and God-consciousness (*taqwā*), to the point where they can see hellfire in this material world.

The Glorified said: "No indeed; if you knew with certain knowledge, you would surely see the hellfire".[10]

Yes, not everyone who shoots hits the target, and truths are not arrows to be shot. Only the most exemplary reach these truths, one after another. Only a small number of those who have purified their souls and cleansed their hearts attain what we have mentioned of unseen unveilings and inner openings.

8. As for in this world, it is the light which the Glorified has referred to saying: "Is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?" (Qur'an, 6:122). And as for the Hereafter, it is what the Glorified has referred to in His saying: "On the Day you see the believing men and believing women, their light proceeding before them and on their right." (Qur'an, 57:12)

9. Qur'an, 29:69

10. Qur'an, 102:5-6

13

KNOWLEDGE

There is no disagreement among theologians that knowledge is among His attributes and that the All-Knowing (*al-ʿĀlim*) and the All-Wise (*al-ʿAlīm*) are among His names. However, they differed regarding the nature of His knowledge of His essence and of other things, holding various positions. Before discussing the levels of His knowledge and its nature, we must first examine the reality of knowledge, so we say:

What is Knowledge?

Knowledge has been defined as the mental image obtained from something in the mind, but this definition only encompasses acquired knowledge (*ḥuṣūlī*), even though there is another type of knowledge which is presential knowledge (*ḥuḍūrī*). The difference between these two types is that in acquired knowledge, what is present to the knower is the abstracted image of the thing, and this mental image is the only means of perceiving and sensing external reality. For this reason, the external thing becomes known accidentally while the mental image is known essentially. As for presential

knowledge, it is the presence of the perceived without the mediation of anything else, such as a person's knowledge of themselves.

In light of what we have mentioned about the division of knowledge into acquired and presential, it is correct to say:

"Knowledge in absolute terms is the presence of the known to the knower."

This definition encompasses both types of knowledge, except that what is present in the first type is the mental image rather than external reality, while in the second type it is the very reality of the known without any medium between it and the knower.

Now that you understand the reality of knowledge, know that the theologians unanimously agree that knowledge is among God's essential perfective attributes, and that the All-Knowing is among His beautiful names. While there is no disagreement about this in general, they did differ regarding the extent and nature of His knowledge holding various positions that we must investigate to determine the truth in this matter. So we say:

His Knowledge of His Essence

They have mentioned various proofs to establish His knowledge of His essence. We will suffice with mentioning two of them:

First: The Bestower of Perfection Cannot Lack It

He created humans with presential knowledge of themselves, so the bestower of this perfection must possess it in the most complete and perfect way, because one who lacks perfection cannot give it. Although we do not and will never fully comprehend the specific nature of His essence's presence to itself, we refer to this knowledge as "the presence of His essence to His essence and His knowledge of it without any mediation whatsoever."

Second: Freedom from Matter is the Criterion of Presence

The criterion of presence and cognitive witnessing is nothing but the freedom of existence from matter. This is because material existence, being quantitative with parts and components that lack unified exis-

tence, has some parts absent from others. Additionally, it is in constant flux and change. Therefore, it is not possible for material existence, insofar as it is material, to know itself, due to the absence of the criterion of knowledge, which is the presence of something before another.

When an existent is free from matter, particularity, and division, its essence is completely present to itself. This is how we witness our own essences being present to themselves. If we were to suppose an existent at a high level of abstraction and simplicity, free from all factors of absence that are characteristics of material beings, its essence would be present to itself. This is the meaning of God's knowledge of His essence – that is, the presence of His essence to His essence in the most complete way, due to His freedom from materiality, composition, and division, as was previously demonstrated in the proof of His simplicity when discussing unity.

Answering an Objection

An objection has been raised against God's knowledge of His essence, arguing that knowledge of something necessitates duality and otherness between the knower and the known. Therefore, His knowledge of His essence would necessitate duality and otherness in His essence, which is impossible.

The answer to this is that conceptual otherness is sufficient for deriving the concepts of knowledge, known, and knower from a single essence. Real distinction is not among the properties of knowledge such that one would object to the essence's knowledge of itself due to the unity of the knower and the known. Rather, the entire criterion is presence, and this is achieved in the abstract existent as previously mentioned.

His Knowledge of Things Before Their Creation

His knowledge of things is of two types: knowledge before creation, meaning His knowledge of things in relation to His essence, and knowledge after creation, meaning His knowledge of things in relation to His action. We demonstrate the first type through two aspects:

First: Knowledge of the Cause is Knowledge of the Effect

Knowledge of the cause (*sabab*) and reason (*'illa*), insofar as it is a cause and reason, is knowledge of the effect. What is meant by knowledge of the cause and reason is knowledge of the aspect that becomes the source for the existence and occurrence of the effect. To clarify this principle, we present two examples:

1. An astronomer who knows astronomical laws and cosmic calculations can determine that an eclipse of the moon or sun, or similar phenomena, will occur at a specific time or position. His knowledge of these occurrences comes only from his knowledge of the cause insofar as it is the cause of such and such.
2. A physician who knows the conditions and types of pulse and the states and conditions of the heart can predict what will happen to the patient in future days. This knowledge comes only from knowledge of the cause insofar as it is the cause.

Having understood how knowledge of the effect is obtained before its existence through knowledge of the cause, we say: The entire universe is an effect of His existence and His essence is its cause. It has been established that His essence knows His essence.

In other words: Knowledge of the essence is knowledge of the aspect from which the entire universe has emanated, and knowledge of that aspect necessitates knowledge of the effect.

Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said:

"Since His essence is the cause of things – in terms of their existence – and knowledge of the cause necessitates knowledge of its effect... understanding them from this perspective must follow the order of their emanation, one after another".[1]

Second: The Perfection of Creation Indicates the Creator's Knowledge

The created thing, through the arrangement of its parts and

1. *Al-Asfār*, 6/275

through the compatibility of all parts with the intended purpose of that creation, indicates that it did not come about through an agent unaware of these specificities. The universe, being God's creation indicates through its marvelous creation and precise composition that its Creator knows what He created and is aware of what He made. The hidden specificities in creation guide us to the attributes of its Maker. The Qur'an points to this evidence in saying: "Would He who created not know? And He is the Subtle, the Aware".[2]

Imam 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a.s.) said: "Glory be to Him who created creation through His power, perfected what He created through His wisdom, and placed everything in its proper place through His knowledge".[3]

His Knowledge of Things After Their Creation

Every contingent being is an effect of God in its realization. The meaning of being an effect is nothing but the connection of the effect's existence to its cause and its subsistence through it, like the subsistence of a prepositional meaning (*ma'nā ḥarfī*) through a nominal meaning (*ma'nā ismī*). Just as the prepositional meaning with all its aspects subsists through the nominal meaning, so too does the effect subsist through its cause that bestows existence upon it. Whatever has this characteristic cannot be outside the existence of its cause, since being outside its scope necessitates independence, which is incompatible with being contingent.

Therefore, it necessarily falls within its scope and does not exist outside it, meaning that all things are present before His essence, and presence is knowledge, as you have learned that knowledge is the presence of the known before the knower.

It follows that just as the world is His act, so too is His knowledge, Glory be to Him. As an approximation, consider the mental images that the soul creates in the vessel of the mind - they are both the

2. Qur'an, 67:14
3. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/85

soul's act and, at the same time, its knowledge. The soul does not need secondary images to know these images. Just as the soul encompasses these images and they subsist through their agent and creator, so too is the world, in its minutest and greatest aspects, created by God subsisting through Him, and He encompasses it. Thus, God's knowledge and His act are different concepts, but they correspond to the same external reality.

It has become clear from what you have learned that His knowledge of His acts after their creation is presentational (*ḥuḍūrī*), just as His knowledge of His essence and His acts before their creation is presentational. For the criterion of knowledge being presentational is the attainment of the known itself and its presence before the knower, not the presence of its form and quiddity. This criterion is fulfilled in His knowledge of His essence and His acts absolutely.

His Knowledge of Particulars

Careful consideration of what we have mentioned about contingent beings clearly demonstrates the necessity of His knowledge of particulars. This is because, as previously mentioned, the very existence of everything is identical to its being known to God and there is no difference in the basis of this judgment between the abstract and the material, or the universal and the particular. Just as the unchanging existent is known to Him in its unchangingness, so too is the changing existent known to God in its change and transformation. Thus, gradual bestowal and presence with the attribute of gradualness before Him necessitates His knowledge, Blessed and Exalted, of external particulars.

You have learned the proof of His knowledge of particulars. What remains is to analyze the objections that have been raised in this area. Here is their explanation:

First Objection: Knowledge of Particulars Necessitates Change in His Knowledge

They said that if He knew what occurs in the universe regarding particulars, this would necessitate change in His knowledge with the

change of the known, otherwise there would be no correspondence. According to this, He only knows particulars as intelligible quiddities, not as changing particulars.

This objection is based on the assumption that His knowledge of things is acquired knowledge (*ḥuṣūlī*) through representational forms subsisting in His essence, Glory be to Him. In this case, change in the known would necessitate change in the forms subsisting in Him which would mean His essence would be subject to change and transformation.

You have learned that His knowledge of existents is presentational (*ḥuḍūrī*), meaning that things in their external identities and concrete realities are present before Him, Glory be to Him. Thus, there is no obstacle to saying that change occurs in His knowledge following change in concrete existents, for the change that is impossible for His knowledge is only that which is described as essential knowledge (*'ilm dhātī*). As for active knowledge (*'ilm fi'lī*), that is, knowledge at the level of action, there is no obstacle to its change like the change of His action, for knowledge at the level of action is nothing but the action itself being His knowledge.

Second Objection: Perception of Particulars Requires an Instrument

The perception of particulars requires material tools and physical instruments, and He is above having a body and its physical requirements.

The answer to this objection is clear, for knowledge of particulars through material instruments is only the condition of one who does not encompass things with sustaining encompassment (*iḥāṭa qayyūmiyya*), and things do not subsist through him and are not present before him, like humans in their acquired knowledge of external particulars. Since their knowledge of these comes through abstracting forms by means of sensory instruments, the perception of particulars depends on those instruments. As for the Necessary Being, mighty is His name, since His knowledge comes through His encompassment of things and their true subsistence through Him,

His knowledge of them does not depend on instruments and their use.

Addendum

In the true Islamic law, He is described as having hearing and sight, and "the All-Hearing" and "the All-Seeing" are counted among His names, Glory be to Him.[4] The truth is that His hearing and sight are not attributes distinct from the attribute of knowledge. The distinction is only in terms of concept, not in terms of reality and instance. You have learned that all contingent worlds are present before Him so all things in general, and audible and visible things in particular, are His actions and at the same time His knowledge.

Furthermore, although the aforementioned criterion exists in things that can be smelled, tasted, and touched - for these too are present before Him like audible and visible things - since the application of these names is associated with matter and sensation in people's minds, it is not correct to apply "the Toucher," "the Taster," and "the Smeller" to Him.

The All-Hearing and All-Seeing is making humans aware that their Lord is All-Hearing, hearing whatever speech they utter, All-Seeing, seeing every action that issues from them, and will hold them accountable one day according to what He heard and saw.

Furthermore, some theologians (*mutakallimīn*) have counted perception among His exalted attributes and the Perceiver - in the active form - among His names, following God's statement: "Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives all vision, and He is the Subtle, the Aware."

There is no doubt that He, glory be to Him - by the ruling of the noble verse - is a perceiver, but the discussion is about whether perception is an attribute beyond knowledge of universals and particulars? Or is it equivalent to and synonymous with knowledge? Or is it

4. The Glorified has described Himself as All-Seeing 42 times, and as All-Hearing 41 times in the Noble Book

a specific kind of knowledge? The closest view is the last one, which is knowledge of particular, concrete existents. So His perception is the witnessing of external things and His complete awareness of them. God said: "Is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" Translation:

There is no doubt that He, glory be to Him - by the ruling of the noble verse - is a perceiver, but the discussion is about whether perception is an attribute beyond knowledge of universals and particulars? Or is it equivalent to and synonymous with knowledge? Or is it a specific kind of knowledge, which is knowledge of particular, concrete existents? So His perception is the witnessing of external things and His complete awareness of them.

ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī says in *al-Mizan*:

"The words used in the Qur'an for types of perception are many, perhaps reaching twenty, and their meanings are not devoid of connection to matter, motion, and change except for five of them, which are: knowledge, preservation, wisdom, awareness, and witnessing. Therefore we notice that they do not entail deficiency and loss when used in reference to Him, glory be to Him."

Through this it becomes apparent that His perception is nothing beyond these five, and the closest view is that it means witnessing. God said: "Is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"

14

POWER

The theologians agree that power is among His essential and perfect attributes like knowledge, and for this reason "the Powerful" and "the All-Powerful" are counted among His names, Glory be to Him. However, they differed regarding the reality of His power. Therefore, it is necessary to first define power and then explain the meaning of power appropriate to His domain.

Definition of Power

There are two well-known definitions of power[1]: First: It is the validity of both action and abstention, where validity means possibility, so the powerful one is one who can validly act or abstain.

Second: It is the emanation of action through will and choice, so the powerful one is one who acts if they will and does not act if they do not will.

An objection has been raised to the first definition that the possibility included in the definition is either essential possibility that

1. *Al-Asfār*, 6/307. The first definition is for the theologians and the second for the philosophers

describes quiddity, or preparatory possibility that describes matter. In either case, it is not valid to include it in the definition of His power because God is above quiddity and matter.

The meaning of will in the second definition is His essential choice, Glory be to Him. Thus acts through His essential choice and likewise abstains - meaning His action and abstention are not necessary for Him, as there is no overwhelming power that compels Him to act or abstain.

Proof of His Power

When an action is characterized by perfection and precision, beauty and splendor, this indicates the agent's knowledge of these aspects and power to bring about such craftsmanship.

For this reason, we see that when He describes the marvels of His actions and the wonders of His craftsmanship in the verses of the Wise Remembrance, He concludes them by mentioning His knowledge and power. He says:

"God who created seven heavens and of the earth the like thereof; the command descends among them, that you may know that God has power over all things and that God encompasses all things in knowledge".[2]

Perfection and precision in action are signs of knowledge and marks of power. Indeed, we see in the words of Imam Ali (a.s.) that he relies on the magnificence of His action and the beauty of His craftsmanship to prove His power. He (a.s.) said: "And He showed us from the kingdom of His power and the wonders that the effects of His wisdom spoke of".[3] He also said: "And He established from the witnesses of clear proofs of His subtle craftsmanship and His great power".[4] And he also said: "So He straightened their crookedness,

2. Qur'an, 65:12
3. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 91
4. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 165

marked their limits, and harmonized through His power their opposites".[5]

The Extent of His Power

Human nature dictates that the absolute perfection to which humans are drawn is capable of all possible things, and it never occurs to minds - were it not for the doubts of skeptics - that His power has limits, or that He is capable of some things but not others. Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "All things are equal to Him in knowledge, power, authority, dominion, and encompassment".[6]

Philosophical reason supports this natural judgment, because His existence is unlimited and infinite, and what is infinite in existence is infinite in perfection and beauty, since existence is the source of perfection. Thus, infinity in terms of existence necessitates infinity in terms of perfection, and what perfection is more splendid than power? Therefore, it is infinite, following the infinity of His existence and perfection.

Religious texts also indicate the vastness of His power. He says: "And God has power over all things".[7]

And He says: "And God has absolute power over all things".[8]

The universality of His power is also explicitly stated in the traditions narrated from the Imams of the Household (a.s.).

Addressing Objections on This Topic

There are certain objections raised against the universality of His power which students might find difficult to resolve. We must mention these and explain how to address them:

1. **Is He capable of creating His own likeness? If answered**

5. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 91
6. *Al-Tawḥīd*, Chapter 9, Hadith 15
7. Qur'an, 33:27
8. Qur'an, 18:45

affirmatively, it would necessitate assuming a partner for Him, Glory be to Him. If answered negatively, it would establish the limitation of His power and its lack of universality.

This is addressed by explaining that it is impossible, so the discussion of whether power extends to it or not does not arise. The reason for its impossibility is that it would necessitate the combination of contradictions, namely: that one thing would be both necessarily existent (*wājib bi-l-dhāt*) and contingently possible in itself. For that likeness, being created, would be contingently possible, and being His likeness, would be necessarily existent, which is clearly impossible.

2. **Is He capable of placing the vast universe inside an egg without reducing the size of the universe or enlarging the egg?**

The answer to this is like the previous one, for placing something large in a small container is impossible in itself, as intuition dictates that a container must be equal to what it contains. Placing something large in a small container would require that container to be both equal to its contents - as required by the law of equality between container and contained - and smaller than it - as per the premise - which is impossible. The discussion of the universality of power only applies after establishing that something is possible in itself. This is what Imam Ali (a.s.) referred to when answering this same question, saying:

"God, the Blessed and Exalted, cannot be attributed with inability, and what you asked about cannot exist."[9]

3. **Can He create something He cannot destroy? If answered affirmatively, it would imply the limitation of**

9. *Al-Tawḥīd*, Chapter 9, Hadith 9

His power since He cannot destroy it. If answered negatively, it would also imply the non-universality of His power.

The answer is: The mentioned thing, being contingently possible, is susceptible to destruction, yet being qualified as impossible to destroy, it would be necessary and not contingently possible. Thus the proposition becomes that one thing is both contingently possible and necessary, susceptible to destruction and not susceptible to it, which is impossible. Therefore, the mentioned premise entails an impossibility, and what entails an impossibility is itself impossible, falling outside the scope of discussing the universality of power, as previously mentioned.

15

LIFE

The theologians have agreed that life is among His attributes and that the Living (*al-Ḥayy*) is one of His beautiful names. However, applying this name to Him depends on understanding the meaning of life and how it applies to God. Thus we say:

The Reality of Life

Material life in animals and humans - insofar as humans are animals - consists of two elements: activity and perception. The four characteristics[1] mentioned by natural scientists relate to action and reaction, affecting and being affected, which we denote as "activity" (*fa ʿʿāliyya*). Similarly, we denote sensation and perception, which are acknowledged to exist in all animal species and are said to exist in plants as well, as "perceptivity" (*darrākiyya*). Thus, the living being is one that perceives and acts, as is the terminology used by divine philosophers.

The criterion of natural life is action and perception, which is

1. These are: attraction and repulsion, growth and development, reproduction and multiplication, movement and reaction

preserved across all levels but with development and perfection, meaning: the removal of deficiencies and impurities that accompany the lower level from the higher level. The action expected from intellectual life in humans cannot be compared to the action of plant and animal cells, just as human comprehension of universal matters is higher and more perfect than plant sensation and animal awareness. Despite this vast difference between the two types of life, we find that we describe all of them as having life in one meaning, and that single meaning is nothing but the being being "perceptive" and "active."

The Meaning of His Life

If it is valid to apply life in a single meaning to those varying degrees, then it must be valid for higher living beings, but in a more perfect way. God is living in the meaning that this word conveys, but with life appropriate to His most exalted station, removing deficiencies and taking only the essence and core. He is living, meaning He is "acting" and "perceiving" - or if you prefer, "all-active" and "all-perceiving" - but not like the activity and perception of contingent beings.

Evidence of His Life

It has been proven by demonstration that He is knowing and powerful, as discussed previously. We have explained that the reality of life in the higher degrees does not go beyond the one described by it being perceptive and active. There is no doubt that God has the most perfect degrees of perception and action, because He has the most perfect degrees of knowledge and power. His action, which springs from His knowledge and power, is the most perfect degree of action, so He is living with the highest degrees of life.

Add to this that He created living beings that perceive and act, and it is impossible for the giver of perfection to lack it.

Addendum

Among His affirmative essential attributes are pre-eternity (*azaliyya*), post-eternity (*abadiyya*), sempiternity (*sarmadiyya*), eternality (*qidam*), and permanence (*baqā'*). Thus, He is eternal and pre-eternal, permanent and post-eternal, and a sempiternal being.

They said: The first two terms are applied to Him because He accompanies all actual or hypothetical times in the past, just as the latter two are applied to Him because He is the being whose existence continues through future times, whether actual or hypothetical. Sempiternity is applied to Him in the sense of being the existent that encompasses all past and future times. This is how the theologians explain these names and attributes.

It should be noted: This explanation befits temporal beings that accompany actual or hypothetical times, whether past or future. However, God is above time and accompaniment with it. Rather, He is the creator of time, both past and future. He is above time and space; no time encompasses Him and no place contains Him. Therefore, the correct understanding is to say: A contingent being is one whose existence does not stem from its essence, is preceded by non-existence in its essence, and non-existence is not impossible for it. In contrast, the Necessarily Existent by Essence is that whose existence stems from its essence, for which non-existence is impossible and never accompanies it. Such a being's existence is not preceded by non-existence, thus it is eternal and pre-eternal. Similarly, non-existence cannot occur to it, thus it is post-eternal and permanent. Considering these two aspects - that its existence is not preceded by non-existence and that non-existence cannot occur to it - it is characterized by sempiternity and is called sempiternal.

16

WILL

Will is among His attributes and the Willing (*al-Murīd*) is among His names. No theologian has ever doubted this. They only differed regarding its reality and whether it is among the attributes of essence or the attributes of action.

The Reality of His Will

Human will, however it is explained, is a phenomenon that appears gradually in the tablet of the soul. It is known that will in this sense cannot be used to describe Him because that would necessitate Him being a material being subject to change and transformation from lacking to possessing, and such qualities are not befitting of the Creator's domain. For this reason, theologians have differed in their explanation of His will. The well-known position among the philosophers and theologians[1] is that God's will is His knowledge that an

1. For a complete overview of the sayings of the philosophers and theologians in interpreting His will, see *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id* by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī with author's annotations: 56-57

action follows the system of good and best, or His knowledge that an action contains benefit returning to other than Him. According to this view, will is among the essential attributes.

Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said:

The meaning of His being willing is that He comprehends His essence and comprehends the system of good that exists in everything from His essence and how it comes to be.[2]

And Abū Isḥāq al-Nawbakhtī said:

He wills, meaning He knows the benefit in an action, so His knowledge calls Him to bring it into existence.[3] It should be noted that the concepts of attributes and their meanings are distinct, and their unity in relation to Him refers to their reality and instance. Thus, explaining will through knowledge amounts to denying the reality of will in Him, Glory be to Him. Due to the invalidity of this explanation, we see that the Imams of the Household (a.s.) reject its explanation through knowledge. Bukayr ibn A'yan said: I asked Abū 'Abdullāh al-Ṣādiq (a.s.): "Are His knowledge and will different or the same...?"

He (a.s.) replied: "Knowledge is not will. Do you not see that you say 'I will do such-and-such if God wills,' but you do not say 'I will do such-and-such if God knows'".[4]

The truth is that will is among the essential attributes and applies to Him free from the impurities of deficiency and the marks of contingency. What is meant by describing Him with will is that He is a voluntary agent as opposed to being a compelled agent, not to establish will for Him as being incidental and passing with the occurrence of what is willed, or that the agent through it transitions from potentiality to actuality. For these characteristics are not considered among the attributes of perfection when qualified by these features. Rather, its perfection lies in its possessor being voluntary, having control over their action, and taking command of their deed. If this is

2. *Al-Asfār*, 6/316
3. *Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt*, 67
4. *Al-Kāfī*: 1/109, Chapter on Divine Will, Hadith 2.

the perfection of will, then God possesses it in the most perfect manner, as He is the voluntary agent who is not subjugated in His authority. This does not mean reducing will to a negative description of Him not being subjugated or coerced. Rather, it is a positive attribute that is His very essence, and expressing it through a negative description does not make it a negative matter, just as explaining knowledge as the absence of ignorance, and power as the absence of inability.

So if it is correct to name this essential choice as will, then will is among His essential attributes; otherwise, it must be considered among the attributes of action.[5]

Will in the Narrations of the People of the Household (a.s.)

It appears from the narrations transmitted from the Imams of the People of the Household (a.s.) that His will and volition are among His attributes of action, like being the Provider and Creator. Here are some of these narrations:

ʿĀṣim ibn Ḥumayd narrated from Abū ʿAbdullāh (a.s.): "I asked: 'Has God always been willing?' He replied: 'The one who wills cannot exist except with what is willed. God has always been knowing and powerful, then He willed'".[6]

Ṣafwān ibn Yaḥyā said: I asked Abū al-Ḥasan (a.s.) to tell me about will from God and from creation.

He (a.s.) said: "Will from creation is the inner thought and what

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5. What our teacher - may his shadow be prolonged - has explained regarding the interpretation of Divine Will agrees with the theory of ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī (may his soul be sanctified). He also critiqued the well-known philosophical view of interpreting will as knowledge of the most beneficial system, then established an essential free will for Allah, then explained that will in its common meaning can only be attributed to Allah after removing imperfections, as an active attribute derived from His actions, similar to creation, bringing into existence, and mercy. This is in consideration of the completion of the action in terms of cause and the presence of complete cause for action, just as it is said when observing the agent gathering the means of action to act, that he wills such an action. See: *Al-Asfār*: 6/315-316; *Nihāyat al-Ḥikma*: Stage 12, Chapter 13; *Bidāyat al-Ḥikma*: Stage 12, Chapters 6 and 8.

6. *Al-Kāfī*: 1/109, Chapter on Divine Will, Hadith 1.

appears to them afterward in action. As for will from God the Exalted, His will is His bringing into being, nothing else, because He does not contemplate, worry, or think, and these attributes are negated from Him as they are attributes of creation. God's will is the action itself, nothing else. He says to it 'Be' and it is, without utterance, speech with a tongue, concern, thought, or modality for that, just as there is no modality for Him".[7]

Muḥammad ibn Muslim narrated from Abū 'Abdullāh (a.s.) who said: "Volition (*mashī'a*) is originated".[8]

You see that the first narration negates the eternality of will, so it cannot be among His essential attributes which are identical to His essence. The third narration explicitly states that volition is originated, so it cannot be among His essential attributes. The second narration explicitly states that His will is identical to His bringing into being and creation, so it is identical to His action. However, the narrations do not negate will being among His essential attributes in the sense that we explained it, meaning: essential choice. Rather, what they negate is will in the sense found in humans, because affirming this type of will for God the Exalted necessitates two problems:

First: The eternality of what is willed or the origination of the Willer, as mentioned in the first narration;

Second: The occurrence of change and gradualness in His essence as mentioned in the second narration.

7. Same source: Hadith 3.
8. Same source: Hadith 7.

17

SPEECH

Muslims unanimously agree, following the Qur'an and Tradition, that He is speaking, but they differ on two matters:

a. What is meant by Divine Speech;
b. Whether the Divine Speech is originated or eternal.

This issue preoccupied Islamic scholars and thinkers during the Abbasid era, causing disputes and even bloody conflicts that are detailed in historical accounts, known as the "Inquisition" (*Miḥna*). Therefore, we must examine and analyze these two matters in light of the Qur'an and reliable transmission.

Views on the Meaning of Divine Speech

The views expressed by theologians and philosophers in this area are three:

The view of the *'Adliyya*[1]: This holds that His speech consists of

1. The Mu'tazilites and Imāmī Shī'a are called "the Proponents of Divine Justice"

sounds and letters that do not subsist in God the Exalted through inherence or accident. Rather, He creates them in other entities such as the Preserved Tablet, Gabriel, the Prophet, or others. Just as God the Exalted bestows blessings by creating them in others, He similarly speaks by creating speech in others, and it is not necessary for the agent to be the locus of the action.[2] This meaning of speech is called verbal speech (*kalām lafẓī*) and is among His attributes of action; it is originated with the origination of the action.

The Ash'ari view: It appears from the author of *al-Mawāqif*[3] that the Ash'aris acknowledge verbal speech and its being originated, but they claim another meaning beyond it which they call internal speech (*kalām nafsī*).

The eminent al-Qūshjī said in explaining internal speech (*kalām nafsī*):

"When someone issues a command, prohibition, call, statement, inquiry, or other such utterance, they find within themselves meanings which they express through the verbal expressions that we call sensory speech (*kalām ḥissī*). The meaning that one finds within oneself and that revolves in one's mind does not differ with the variation of expressions according to conventions and terminology. The speaker intends to produce this meaning in the mind of the listener so that they may act accordingly - this is what we call internal speech (*kalām nafsī*)."[4]

This meaning of speech - assuming it exists - would be among His essential attributes and eternal with the eternality of the essence. However, it is nothing beyond conceptual or propositional knowledge, so it does not establish essential speech in the true meaning of speech. As for metaphorically calling knowledge "speech," this is outside the scope of our discussion.

The philosophers' theory: The philosophers held that His

(*'Adliyya*), because they take justice as one of their doctrinal principles and interpret it based on the principle of rational good and evil.

2. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 528; *Al-Munqidh min al-Taqlīd*: 1/215.
3. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/93.
4. *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd lil-Qūshjī*: 319.

speech has a broader concept than verbal speech. Rather, His speech corresponds to His action. Just as every existent is His action and creation, it is likewise His speech and we call this "active speech" (*kalām fi 'lī*).

To clarify: The intended purpose of verbal speech is only to manifest what exists within the speaker's self and is hidden from the addressee and listener. Speech is nothing but an utterance indicating the meaning that the speaker has conceived and wants to create in the listener's mind. Thus, the reality of speech is indication and representation. Undoubtedly, an action indicates the existence of its agent and their existential characteristics. The only difference between the indication of words to meaning and the indication of action to agent is that the former's indication is conventional and constructed, while the latter's is existential and rational. The existential rational indication is stronger than the conventional verbal indication.

Accordingly, any action by the speaker that produces the same effect as speech - manifesting the meanings and realities contained within the agent's inner self - can validly be called speech through extension and development.

The philosophers' theory in explaining His speech corresponds to the divine speech's applications in the Qur'an and Sunna. The Qur'an describes Jesus (a.s.) as God's word that He cast to the Virgin Mary. The Exalted said:

"The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was but a messenger of God and His word that He cast to Mary, and a spirit from Him".[5]

Imam Ali (a.s.) explained His saying through His action which He creates and represents, where he said:

"He says to what He wills to exist: 'Be,' and it is - not through a sound that strikes, nor through a call that is heard. Rather, His speech is His action which He creates and represents."

Through this it becomes[6] clear that the correct view among the

5. Qur'an, 4:171.
6. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Sermon 186.

preceding opinions is the philosophers' theory. As for the theory of the Justice-oriented theologians (*'Adliyya*) among the scholastic theologians, it does not apply to all instances of His speech but rather represents only a small portion of it. As for the Ash'ari theory, it has no basis in the Qur'an and Sunna.

The Justice-oriented theologians were correct in one aspect and incorrect in another. They were correct in making His speech one of His active attributes but they erred in restricting it to verbal speech.

However, the Ash'aris erred in two aspects: in restricting active speech to verbal speech, and in claiming another type of speech which they called internal speech (*kalām nafsī*) and making it one of His essential attributes.

Is His Speech Originated or Eternal?

They differed regarding whether His speech is temporal or eternal, holding various positions:

1. The Theory of Eternality

The first to affirm and insist upon the non-temporality of the Qur'an and that His speech is not created were the people of Hadith, foremost among them "Ahmad ibn Hanbal." He was the one who began promoting and passionately defending the idea that the Qur'an is not created, enduring hardships for this cause that are recorded in the pages of history. Here is the text of his theory on this matter:

"The Qur'an is the speech of God, not created. Whoever claims that the Qur'an is created is a Jahmite (*Jahmī*) infidel, and whoever claims that the Qur'an is the speech of God, Mighty and Majestic, but stops there without saying whether it is created or uncreated, is worse than the first."[7]

2. The Theory of Temporality

The Mu'tazilites adopted the view that the Qur'an is created and defended it through various means. When the Abbasid Caliphate

7. *Al-Sunna*: 49.

during the era of al-Ma'mūn and after him until the time of al-Wāthiq bi-llāh supported the Mu'tazilite movement and its views, the Mu'tazilites took advantage of this cover and began testing the scholars of Islamic territories on this issue. The result of this examination was that all the jurists of that era responded in favor of the creation theory, with only a small group refusing, led by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Here is what Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār said in this regard:

"As for our doctrine on this matter, the Qur'an is God's speech and revelation, and it is created and temporal. God sent it down to His Prophet to be a sign and indicator of his prophethood, and made it an evidence for us regarding rulings so we may refer to it concerning what is lawful and forbidden. This obligates us to praise, thank, glorify, and sanctify Him. Thus, what we hear and recite today, even if what we recite is not being created now by God the Exalted, is truly attributed to Him just as the poetry we recite today from Imru' al-Qays is truly attributed to him, even though Imru' al-Qays is not creating it now."[8]

This theory is the accepted one among the Imami Shi'is.[9]

3. The Theory of Eternality and Temporality

The first thing that Shaykh al-Ash'arī declared in this regard was the statement that the Qur'an is not created, where he said:

"And we say: The Qur'an is the speech of God, not created, and whoever says the Qur'an is created is an infidel."[10] However, he saw that the view of the eternality of the recited and pronounced Qur'an was something that sound reason could not accept, so he came up with a new theory to reconcile the notion of the Qur'an being uncreated by suggesting that what is meant by God's speech is not the recited Qur'an but rather the internal speech (*kalām nafsī*).

This is refuted because there is no evidence from reason or revelation for internal speech.

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8. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 528.
9. *Al-Munqidh min al-Taqlīd*: 1/215.
10. *Al-Ibāna*: 21, and see: *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*: 1/321.

The Qur'an's Evidence for the Temporality of His Speech

The Qur'an explicitly states the temporality of His speech - meaning the Qur'an - in His words: "No fresh reminder comes to them from their Lord except that they listen to it while they play."[11]

What is meant by "reminder" (*dhikr*) is the Qur'an itself, as evidenced by His words:

"Indeed, We have sent down the reminder, and indeed We will preserve it."[12]

And His words: "And indeed, it is a reminder for you and your people."[13]

What is meant by "fresh" (*muḥdath*) is new, and it is a description of the "reminder." The meaning of it being new is that it came to them after the Gospel, just as the Gospel was new because it came after the Torah, and likewise some chapters and verses of the Qur'an are new reminders that came after others.

The Position of the People of the House (a.s.)

The history of this debate and the tribulations that both groups experienced testifies that the intensity of the discussion was not for establishing truth and removing doubts. Rather, each group exploited this issue to harm their opponents. For this reason, the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.) prevented their companions from delving into this matter. Al-Rayyān ibn al-Ṣalt asked Imam al-Riḍā (a.s.): "What do you say about the Qur'an?" He (a.s.) replied:

"It is the speech of God. Do not go beyond it, and do not seek guidance in anything else, lest you go astray."[14] We see that the Imam (a.s.) avoided delving into this issue because he saw that discussing it was not in Islam's interest, and that sufficing with it being God's speech was more decisive in settling the dispute. However, when they

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11. Qur'an, 21:2.
12. Qur'an, 15:9.
13. Qur'an, 43:44.
14. *Al-Tawḥīd lil-Ṣadūq*: Chapter 30, Hadith 2.

(a.s.) sensed the situation was safe, they expressed their opinion on the matter and declared that the Creator is God and everything else is created. The Qur'an is not His Self otherwise it would necessitate the unity of the sender and what is sent down. Therefore, it is other than Him, and thus must necessarily be created.

Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn ʿUbayd al-Yaqṭīnī reported that ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a.s.) wrote to some of his followers in Baghdad, stating: "There is no creator except God, the Mighty and Majestic, and everything else is created. The Qur'an is the speech of God - do not give it a name of your own making, lest you become one of those who go astray."[15]

Addendum

Muslims and theologians agree that truthfulness is among His attributes and that He is truthful. What is meant by His truthfulness is that His speech is free from any trace of falsehood. Since our chosen view regarding "speech" (*kalām*) is that it is among the attributes of action, truthfulness in speech is likewise, and this is clear.

One can argue for His truthfulness by noting that lying is rationally repugnant, and He is above what reason considers repugnant. This proof is based on the principle of rational determination of good and evil (*al-taḥsīn wa-l-taqbīḥ al-ʿaqliyyayn*), which is one of the fundamental principles in the theology of the Justice-seekers (*ʿAdliyya*).

15. Previous source: Hadith 4.

18

THE REVEALED ATTRIBUTES

Some theologians have divided His attributes into essential and revealed (*khabariyya*). The first category refers to His known attributes such as knowledge, power, and life, while the second refers to what the apparent meanings of verses and traditions have established for Him such as elevation, face, and hands, among others. Theologians have differed in their explanation of this category of attributes, holding various positions:

First: Affirmation with Qualification and Anthropomorphism

The Anthropomorphists (*mujassima* and *mushabbiha*) claimed that God has eyes and hands like humans. Al-Shahrastānī said:

"As for the Anthropomorphists among the literalists... they permitted touching and handshaking with their Lord, and that sincere Muslims would embrace Him in this world and the next, when they reach the level of sincerity through spiritual exercise and effort."[1] Since anthropomorphism and corporealism are invalid both

1. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/105.

rationally and textually, there is no doubt about the invalidity of this view.

Second: Affirmation without Qualification or Comparison

Al-Shaykh al-Ashʿarī and his followers apply these attributes to God according to their commonly understood meanings, but to avoid comparison they say: "without comparison or qualification." Al-Ashʿarī says:

"God has a face without qualification, as He said: 'And there remains the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor'.[2]

And He has two hands without qualification, as He said: 'I created with My two hands'.[3]"[4]

This view has been attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfiʿī, and Ibn Kathīr.[5] The essence of this view is that He possesses these realities but not like those found in humans. He has a hand and an eye, but not like our hands and eyes, and thus they claim to have reconciled between the apparent meanings of texts and the requirements of divine transcendence.

I say: Claiming that God has a hand unlike our hands, or a face unlike our faces, and similarly for other revealed attributes, is more like riddles. Using them in their literal meanings while affirming their meanings for God without qualification is like saying an animal is literally a lion but without a tail, claws, fangs, or... Presenting Islamic doctrine in such an ambiguous and puzzling way, as in this view, or presenting it in an anthropomorphic and corporeal way inherited from Judaism and Christianity, as in the first view, is incompatible with Islam's and the Qur'an's approach to presenting beliefs to Islamic society.

Among those who opposed this theory was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. The essence of his critique is that these expressions used in

2. Qur'an, 55:27.
3. Qur'an, 38:75.
4. *Al-Ibāna*: 75.
5. See: *ʿAlāqat al-Ithbāt wa-l-Tafwīḍ*: 46-49.

Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions have apparent meanings - the sensory meanings we observe - which are impossible to attribute to God. They also have well-known metaphorical meanings that Arabs understand without requiring explanation or exegesis. When one hears the word "hand" in the Prophet's (s.a.w.) saying: "God kneaded Adam with His hand, and the heart of the believer is between two fingers of the Most Merciful's fingers," one should know that these terms are used with two meanings: The first - which is the original usage - refers to an element composed of flesh, bone, and nerve. The term "hand" may also be borrowed for another meaning that is not physical at all, as in saying: "The city is in the hand of the prince." This is understood even if the prince has lost his hand. Therefore, both common people and others must realize with absolute certainty that the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not intend a physical body, and that this is impossible for God. If someone imagines that God is a body composed of organs, they are worshipping an idol, for every body is created, and worshipping creation is disbelief, just as idol worship was disbelief because idols are created.[6]

Among those who opposed this theory was the contemporary scholar Abū Zahra, who said: "Their statement that God has a hand but we do not know what it is like, and that God descends but not like our descending" and so forth, these are references to unknowns whose meaning and purpose we do not understand.[7]

Third: Delegation (*tafwīḍ*)

A group of Ash'arīs and others maintained that these attributes apply to God while delegating their intended meaning to Him. Al-Shahrastānī said:

"A large group of the predecessors affirm revealed attributes such as the two hands and face without interpreting them, but they say: We do not know the meaning of the revealed text in this regard, such

6. *Iljā' al-'Awām 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām*: 55.
7. *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya*: 1/219-220.

as His saying: 'The Most Merciful established Himself above the Throne.'

And His saying: 'What I created with My two hands.' We are not obligated to know the explanation of these verses; rather, the obligation is to believe that He has no partner, and we have established that".[8]

Al-Rāzī inclined to this view and said:

"Regarding these ambiguous verses, we must be certain that God's intended meaning in them is something other than their apparent meanings, just as we must delegate their meaning to God and it is not permissible to delve into their exegesis".[9]

I say:

The proponents of delegation (*tafwīḍ*) have a clear excuse in this regard, for they consider the verses containing reported attributes (*ṣifāt khabariyya*) to be among the ambiguous verses (*mutashābihāt*), and God has forbidden seeking their interpretation and commanded His servants to believe in them.[10] Yes, it can be observed regarding their statement that these verses are not among the ambiguous verses, for their meaning is not ambiguous[11] when examined by a person free from any preconceptions.

Fourth: Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)

The rationalist theologians (*'Adliyya*) among the scholastic theologians are well-known for this theory, as they explain the hand as blessing and power, and establishment (*istiwā'*) as dominion and manifestation of power, and they were followed in this by a group of Ash'aris and others.

I say: The apparent meaning is of two types: the literal apparent

8. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/92-93, summarized.
9. *Asās al-Taqdīs*: 223.
10. See Qur'an, 3:7
11. This means that although these verses may appear ambiguous at first glance and before referring them to the definitive verses, they become definitive after being referred to them.

meaning and the contextual apparent meaning. For example, the word "hand" on its own apparently refers to the specific bodily organ, but this is not the case when it is surrounded by contextual indicators. For when someone says in praise of a person that "he has an open hand," or in criticism that "he has a closed hand," this is not apparently referring to the physical hand that we called the literal meaning, but rather is apparent in [meaning] generosity and giving, or miserliness and stinginess - even if the person might be missing a hand. To interpret the phrase differently would be to interpret it against its apparent meaning.

Based on this, we must examine the statements of the interpreters (*mu'awwila*). If their interpretation follows what we have explained, then they are not really interpreters but rather are following the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and Sunna. Explaining the Noble Book - in light of the contextual indicators present within it - is not interpretation (*ta'wīl*) but rather following the texts and their apparent meanings. However, if their interpretation involves inventing meanings for the verses without any connected or separate contextual indicators pointing to them, then interpretation in this sense is no less dangerous than affirmation that leads either to anthropomorphism or to complexity and ambiguity.[12]

In light of the criterion and standard we have established, you can explain what appears in revelation regarding the face[13], eye[14], side[15], coming[16], aboveness[17], throne[18], establishment[19] and similar concepts, without compromising the dignity of divine transcendence,

12. Our teacher (may his shadow be prolonged) has thoroughly discussed the types of interpretation in the introduction to the fifth volume of his Qur'anic encyclopedia *Mafāhīm al-Qur'an*, 12-16.
13. Qur'an, 28:88
14. Qur'an, 11:37
15. Qur'an, 39:56
16. Qur'an, 89:22; Qur'an, 39:56
17. Qur'an, 48:10
18. Qur'an, 17:42
19. Qur'an, 20:5

and without departing from the apparent meanings of the verses through incorrect, far-fetched interpretations.

19

NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

The negative attribute is that which indicates a negative meaning. However, it is not permissible to negate any perfection from God as He is the source of all perfection. Thus His negative attributes are those that indicate the negation of imperfection and need, such as "not ignorant" and "not powerless." Since the meaning of imperfection and need is in the meaning of negating perfection, the negative attribute that indicates the negation of imperfection refers back to a single negation, which is the negation of imperfection and need. Al-Ḥakīm al-Sabzawārī did well in this regard when he said:

"And His negative attribute is the negation of negation, which comes in negating need, all are included therein"[1]

Various unsound beliefs and opinions emerged regarding His negative attributes, such as divine indwelling (*ḥulūl*), directionality, visibility and others. This led the scholastic theologians to examine these negative attributes in their theological works. The fundamental principle that invalidates all these doctrines and opinions is necessary existence by essence (*wujūb al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*), for all of them

1. *Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 103

necessitate composition and corporeality, which are signs of poverty and need that contradict necessary existence by essence. We have already discussed some of these attributes, such as the negation of partners, composition, and attributes additional to the essence in the discussions of divine unity. Now we will examine others, saying that the Exalted:

1. Is Not a Body

A body - according to the properties we know of it - is that which encompasses the three dimensions of length, width, and depth. It is inseparable from composition, and that which is composed needs its parts, and that which needs cannot be necessarily existent by essence.

2. Is Not in a Direction[2] or Location

His independence from these has been demonstrated by what we mentioned in the proof negating corporeality, for whatever exists in a direction or location can only be a body or corporeal.

3. Does Not Inhere in Anything

What is understood from inherence (*ḥulūl*) is the subsistence of one existent in another existent in a dependent manner. This meaning cannot be valid regarding Him as it would necessitate need and subsistence in another.

4. Is Not United with Other than Him

2. The end of every extension and its limit, in terms of being an end, is either a point, surface, or line. In terms of being situated in sensory reference, it is a direction. The difference between direction and place is that direction is the destination of movement in terms of reaching it, while place is the destination in terms of being present in it. (*Sharḥ al-Manẓūma*, 256)

The reality of union (*ittiḥād*) refers to two distinct things becoming one thing. This is impossible regarding Him in addition to being impossible in itself. For that other, by virtue of necessary existence being confined to one, is contingent. Thus after union, either both would exist - in which case there is no union - or one of them would exist while the other would be non-existent. The non-existent would either be the contingent, which leads to contradiction and absence of union, or the necessary, which leads to the impossible consequence of the necessary being non-existent.

5. Is Not a Locus for Temporal Events

The proof for this is that if any temporal event were to subsist in His essence, it would necessitate His change. The consequent is false, therefore the antecedent is likewise false. The explanation of this correlation is that change refers to the transition from one state to another. Thus, if something temporal were to occur in His essence, something would come into being in His essence that did not exist before, resulting in a transition from one state to another.

As for the falsity of the consequent, this is because change is the result of a potentiality (*isti'dād*) in matter which, under specific conditions, moves from potentiality to actuality. If it were possible for the Necessary Being to be a locus for temporal events, it would be possible for His existence to carry a potentiality for moving from potentiality to actuality. This is one of the characteristics of material things, and He is far above being matter or material.

6. Pleasure and Pain Do Not Subsist in His Essence

The terms pain and pleasure may be used to refer to physical pain and pleasure, and being characterized by these necessitates corporeality and matter, from which He is far above as previously discussed.

These terms may also be used to refer to intellectual pain and pleasure, meaning the rational faculty's perception of what is compatible or incompatible with it. Since nothing in the realm of

existence is incompatible with His essence because all existents are His acts and creations, and between an act and its agent there is complete existential compatibility, no intellectual pain can be conceived for Him, glory be to Him.

As for intellectual pleasure, some have affirmed it for God saying that the Necessary Being is at the height of beauty, perfection, and splendor. Thus, when He intellects His essence, He intellects the most perfect and complete of existents, making Him the greatest perceiver of the most sublime perceived through the most perfect perception.

However, some have prohibited describing Him with intellectual pleasure as well, due to the lack of religious permission for this. Among the Imami theologians who permitted attribution of intellectual pleasure was the author of *al-Yāqūt*, where he said:

"The Effecter experiences joy in His essence because His knowledge of His supreme perfection necessitates this for Him. How could this not be the case when even one of us experiences pleasure in our imperfect perfection?"[3]

This is also apparent in the words of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī in *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*, where he absolutely negated pain but restricted the negated pleasure to the physical kind.[4] Among those who prohibited it was al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī, who said:

"Muslims have agreed on not applying these two terms to Him... As for the philosophers, when they... interpreted pleasure as the perception of what is compatible, they applied the term pleasure to Him, meaning by it His knowledge of His perfect essence. Thus there is no dispute with them regarding the meaning, since anyone can interpret their terms as they wish, but we dispute applying this term to Him due to the lack of religious permission."[5]

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3. *Anwār al-Malakūt*, 102
4. *Kashf al-Murād*: Purpose 3, Chapter 2, Issue 18
5. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: Rule 4, Pillar 2, Research 8

20

HE CANNOT BE SEEN

The *'Adliyya* have agreed that He cannot be seen with eyes, neither in this world nor in the hereafter. As for others, the Karrāmiyya and Anthropomorphists who describe God as having corporeality and establish direction for Him, permitted His vision without question in both worlds. The traditionalists and Ash'arīs - while avoiding attributing corporeality and direction to Him, glory be to Him - maintained that He will be seen on the Day of Resurrection and that the believers will see Him as they see the full moon. A thorough investigation of this topic depends on an analytical study of three matters:

a. Determining the point of contention;
b. Proofs for the impossibility of vision;
c. Proofs of those who maintain its possibility.

What is the Point of Contention?

The vision that is considered impossible and prohibited according to the *'Adliyya* is visual sight in its literal sense, not what is expressed as spiritual vision as mentioned in the narrations of the People of the

House (a.s.), nor the complete intellectual witnessing in mystical terminology. This meaning of vision is apparent in the words of Shaykh al-Ashʿarī where he said:

"We believe that God will be seen in the hereafter with eyes just as the moon is seen on the night when it is full. The believers will see Him as reported in the narrations from the Messenger of God (s.a.w.)".[1]

He also said:

"If someone asks: 'Why do you say that seeing God with eyes is possible through analogy?' The response is: We say this because what cannot be attributed to God and what is impossible for Him, does not necessitate the impossibility of vision".[2]

However, when later scholars among them saw that claiming the possibility of visual sight was impossible regarding the Exalted, they attempted to validate their position through various approaches. Imam al-Rāzī said:

"Before beginning the evidence, we must first clarify the point of contention. Someone might say: if by vision you mean complete disclosure (*kashf*), then there is no dispute about its existence. And if you mean by it the state we find in ourselves when seeing physical bodies, then there is no dispute about its impossibility." He continued: "The answer is that when we know something without seeing it, then we see it, we perceive a distinction between the two states. This distinction does not relate to the impression of an image in the eye nor to the emission of rays from it, but rather to another state called vision, and we claim that the attachment of this attribute to God's essence is possible".[3] The summary of this - as explained by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī - is that the state that occurs when an image is impressed in the eye or when rays emit from it, which differs from the state that occurs during knowledge, can occur without the impression or emission of rays.

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1. *Al-Ibāna*, 21
2. *Al-Lumaʿ*, 61 (summarized)
3. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 316

The observation on this is: The mentioned state is either literal visual sight, which is impossible regarding the Exalted as al-Rāzī himself admitted, or it is not visual sight but rather shares with visual sight in its result, meaning: witnessing (*mushāhada*). In this case, it returns to complete disclosure and spiritual vision, about which there is no dispute. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī said: "Proving that this state is different from complete disclosure requires evidence".[4]

Evidence for the Impossibility of Seeing Him

The impossibility of vision is demonstrated by several aspects:

1. Vision is only valid for what is facing - like a body - or what is in the position of facing - like an image in a mirror. Facing and what is in its position can only be realized in things that have direction, and God is above having direction, so He cannot be seen. The author of *al-Yāqūt* referred to this when he said: "His vision is not valid, due to the impossibility of direction applying to Him".[5]
2. Vision can only be realized through the reflection of rays from the visible object to the eye's apparatus, which would necessitate that the Exalted be a body with dimensions.
3. Vision through the eye's apparatus is a type of sensory indication with the pupil, and sensory indication can only be realized with something that is physically indicated and exists in a direction, while God is above corporeality and direction.
4. Vision must either encompass the entire essence or part of it. In the first case, it would necessitate that the visible object be limited and finite, and in the second case, it would necessitate that it be composed of parts and segments. Both are impossible regarding Him.

4. Same source, 318
5. *Anwār al-Malakūt*, 82

Arguments of Those Who Support Possibility

Those who support the possibility of seeing God have both rational and scriptural evidence. Among their rational arguments is what al-Ash'arī mentioned when he said:

"The possibility of vision does not establish temporality, because the visible object is not visible due to being temporal. If it were visible for that reason, it would necessitate that everything temporal be visible, which is invalid according to him".[6]

It can be observed that: Temporality is not a sufficient condition for vision such that everything temporal must be visible. Rather, it is a necessary condition that depends on the presence of other conditions we mentioned. Since some of these conditions are not present in abstract temporal beings, vision does not apply to them.

There is another rational argument used by later Ash'ari scholars, which concludes that the criterion for vision and what validates it is something common between the Necessary Being and contingent beings, namely existence. They said:

Vision is common between substance and accident, and shared vision must have a single cause, which is either existence or temporality. Temporality is not suitable as a cause because it is a non-existential matter, so existence is determined. This leads to the conclusion that the validity of vision is shared between the Necessary Being and contingent beings.[7]

This argument is very weak, which is why even Ash'ari thinkers did not accept it. One could say: The common aspect of vision in substance and accident is not existence as existence, but rather existence qualified by several conditions - namely being contingent, material, and falling within specific conditions that are impossible for Him. If existence were the complete criterion for the validity of vision, it would necessitate the validity of seeing thoughts, beliefs,

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6. *Al-Luma'*, 61
7. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/115; *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd lil-Qūshjī*, 329-330; *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 317; *Kashf al-Murād*, 231; *Qawā'id al-Marām*, 78

spiritual matters, and psychological qualities like power, will, and other spiritual existential matters that cannot be seen.

The Supporters' Evidence from the Qur'an

Those who support possibility cited verses from the Qur'an:

First, God's words: "Faces on that Day will be radiant, looking at their Lord".[8]

The explanation of this evidence: In language, "looking" (*naẓar*) can mean waiting and is used without a preposition; it can mean contemplation and is used with "in" (*fī*); it can mean compassion and is used with "for" (*lī*); and it can mean seeing and is used with "to" (*ilā*). Since "looking" in the verse is connected with "to", it must mean seeing.[9]

It can be observed that: Looking (*naẓar*) when connected with "to" (*ilā*), while it can mean seeing, can also be used metaphorically for expectation and waiting, as the poet said:

"Faces looking on the day of Badr towards the Most Merciful, bringing success"

And as another poet said:

"Indeed, I am looking towards what you promised, like the poor person looks towards the wealthy one who is well-off"

It has become common in conversations to say: "So-and-so is looking to so-and-so's hand," meaning that he is a destitute person in need, expecting the other's giving.

Contemplating the two verses by comparing them with the two verses that follow guides us to understand that the intended meaning of looking (*naẓar*) in the verse is expectation and waiting, not seeing. Here are the verses arranged for comparison:

"Faces on that Day will be radiant" and this is contrasted with His words: "And faces on that Day will be gloomy."

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8. Qur'an, 75:22-23
9. *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd lil-Fāḍil al-Qūshjī*, 331

"Looking towards their Lord" and this is contrasted with His words: "Certain that a backbreaking calamity will befall them."

The first two passages describe people on the Day of Resurrection as being of two groups: an obedient group with radiant faces, and a disobedient group with gloomy faces. Then another description is given for each: for the first group, that they are looking towards their Lord, and for the second group, that they expect a backbreaking calamity to befall them, meaning they anticipate a punishment that will break their backs and crush their spines.

The contrast between the third and fourth passages testifies to the intended meaning of the third passage which is opposite to the fourth. Since the fourth passage clearly indicates that the disobedient expect backbreaking punishment, the intended meaning of the third passage must be the expectation of mercy and generosity from God not seeing Him.

Second, when Moses (a.s.) says in the Qur'an: "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You".[10]

The argument is that if seeing [God] were not possible, then Moses' request would have been either ignorance or futility.[11] The response to this is that contemplating all the verses that appear in the story indicates that Moses (a.s.) only requested to see [God] to refute his people when they asked him to request vision for himself, so that his seeing God would take the place of their seeing. This was after they had asked him to show them God openly so they would believe that God had spoken to him, whereupon the thunderbolt struck them. Then Moses asked God to bring them back to life, so he could defend himself against his people's objections when he returned to them, as they might say: "You were not truthful in claiming that God speaks to you; you took them away and killed them." At that point, God brought them back to life and sent them with him. Here are the verses that appear in the story:

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10. Qur'an, 7:143
11. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 320

a. "And when you said, 'O Moses, we will never believe you until we see God openly,' so the thunderbolt seized you while you were looking on."[12]
b. "The People of the Book ask you to bring down upon them a book from heaven. They asked Moses for even more than that, for they said, 'Show us God openly,' so the thunderbolt seized them for their wrongdoing."[13]
c. "And Moses chose seventy men from his people for Our appointment. When the earthquake seized them, he said, 'My Lord, if You had willed, You could have destroyed them before, and me [as well]. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done?'"[14]
d. "And when Moses came to Our appointment and his Lord spoke to him, he said, 'My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You.'"[15]

The first and second verses indicate that the People of the Book asked Moses to request from God that He show them His essence, and for this request they deserved punishment and destruction, so the thunderbolt seized them. The third verse indicates that those whom Moses chose for his Lord's appointment were seized by the earthquake, which only took them because of their foolish action. It appears that what is meant by this is the request to see [God] mentioned in the two preceding verses, and what is meant by the earthquake is the thunderbolt's shock, just as the destruction of the people of Ṣāliḥ is sometimes expressed as an earthquake[16] and other times as a thunderbolt.[17] Since Moses had only one appointment with his people, the appointment in the third verse is the same as the appointment mentioned in the fourth verse. At this appointment,

12. Qur'an, 2:55
13. Qur'an, 4:153
14. Qur'an, 7:155
15. Qur'an, 7:143
16. See Qur'an, 7:78
17. See Qur'an, 41:17

both requests occurred, though the people's request to see [God] came before Moses' request to see for himself. The people asked to see [God] literally, while Moses asked for it to rebuke his people and silence them. This is evidenced by the fact that no blame, reproach, accountability, or punishment was directed at the Interlocutor [Moses] from the Glorified One, but rather He sufficed with saying:

"You will never see Me."

Third, God's words - in response to Moses when he asked to see [Him] for himself:

"But look at the mountain; if it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me."[18]

The argument states: "He made seeing conditional upon the mountain remaining firm, which is possible, and what is conditional upon something possible is itself possible, therefore seeing [God] is possible."[19] The observation on this is that what is being conditioned upon is not the possibility of remaining firm, but rather its existence and actualization after His manifestation to the mountain, and it is established that it did not remain firm after the manifestation, as God says:

"And when his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He made it collapse into dust, and Moses fell unconscious."[20]

Furthermore, what is mentioned in the verse is the mountain remaining firm while looking at it after His manifestation upon it, and it is known that its remaining firm in that state is impossible. This is what al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī referred to when he said: "Making vision conditional upon the stability of what is moving does not indicate possibility."[21]

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18. Qur'an, 7:143
19. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*, 319; *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd lil-Qūshjī*, 329
20. Qur'an, 7:143
21. *Kashf al-Murād*: 231; *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*: 319.

Seeing God according to the Narrations of the People of the House (a.s.)

One who refers to Imam ʿAlī's (a.s.) sermons on divine unity and what has been transmitted from the Imams of the pure lineage (a.s.) will find that their doctrine regarding this matter is the impossibility of vision. Those who wish to examine Imam ʿAlī's (a.s.) words should refer to *Nahj al-Balāgha*, and for the words of the other Imams of the People of the House (a.s.), they should refer to *al-Kāfī* by Thiqat al-Islām al-Kulaynī and *al-Tawḥīd* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq.[22] Moreover, while they (a.s.) emphasized the invalidity of physical, visual sight, they explicitly affirmed the possibility of spiritual vision. Thus, when Imam ʿAlī (a.s.) was asked by Dhiʿlib al-Yamānī, "Have you seen your Lord, O Commander of the Faithful?" he (a.s.) replied: "Would I worship what I do not see?!" He asked: "How do you see Him?" He (a.s.) said: "Eyes do not perceive Him through direct vision, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of faith."[23] Similarly, he (a.s.) answered a Jewish scholar when he asked the same question.[24] Al-Ṣadūq narrated through his chain from ʿAbdallāh ibn Sinān from his father, who said:

I was present with Abū Jaʿfar (a.s.) when a man from the Khawārij entered and said to him: "O Abū Jaʿfar, what do you worship?" He said: "God." The man asked: "Have you seen Him?" He replied: "Eyes have not seen Him through direct vision, but hearts have seen Him through the realities of faith."[25] There are other such narrations, but as for investigating the reality of that spiritual vision, which is different from physical, visual sight, that should be sought in its proper sources.

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22. *Al-Kāfī*, 1/chapter on invalidation of seeing; *Al-Tawḥīd*, chapter eight. Also refer to *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/chapter on negation of seeing and interpretation of related verses.
23. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Sermon 179.
24. See: *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq: Chapter 8, Hadith 6.
25. Previous source: Hadith 5.

PART IV

ON DIVINE WISDOM AND JUSTICE

21

DEFINITIONS AND EVIDENCE

The Definition of Wisdom

The etymological root of the Arabic word for wisdom (*ḥikma*) is *ḥukm*, which means to prevent or restrain. Ibn Fāris said:

"The letters ḥā, kāf, and mīm form one root meaning prevention or restraint. The first of these is judgment (*ḥukm*), which is the prevention of injustice. A horse's bridle is called *ḥakama* because it prevents [unwanted movement]. One says: 'I bridled the horse' and 'I restrained it.' Similarly, one says: 'I restrained the foolish person' and 'I controlled him,' when you prevented him [from acting]. Wisdom (*ḥikma*) follows this pattern because it prevents ignorance. And you say: 'I made someone an arbitrator' meaning I prevented him from what he wants."[1]

Wisdom has been applied to mean justice, knowledge, forbearance, prophethood, that which prevents ignorance, any speech conforming to truth, putting something in its proper place, and correctness and soundness of matters.[2]

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1. *Mu'jam al-Maqāyīs fī al-Lugha*: 277.
2. *Aqrab al-Mawārid*: 1/219.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī defined wisdom as "attaining truth through knowledge and intellect," then said: "Wisdom from God Most High is knowledge of things and bringing them into existence with utmost perfection, while from humans it is knowledge of existents and doing good deeds."[3]

In the terminology of the theologians, wisdom can be either a description of knowledge or a description of action. The first is explained as the most excellent and perfect knowledge, while the second is explained as performing actions perfectly and being free from what is inappropriate. Al-Rāzī said[4]:

"There are several aspects to [the term] 'wise' (*ḥakīm*): First, it is in the form of *fa'īl* meaning *muf'il*, like *alīm* meaning causing pain. The meaning of perfection regarding God Most High in creating things is the perfection of their management and excellence of their determination, as God Most High said: 'Who perfected everything He created.'[5]

The intended meaning is not aesthetic beauty in appearance, but rather the excellence of management in placing everything in its proper place according to what is beneficial, which is what is meant by His saying: 'And He created everything and determined it with [precise] determination.'[6]

Second: Wisdom refers to knowledge of the most excellent objects of knowledge through the most excellent sciences, so 'wise' means 'knowing.'

Third: Wisdom refers to being free from doing what is inappropriate."

God Most High said: "Did you think that We created you in vain?"[7]

In summary: Wisdom is either a description of knowledge or a description of action. The first is theoretical wisdom, and the second

3. *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*: 127.
4. *Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*: 279-280.
5. Qur'an, 32:7.
6. Qur'an, 25:2.
7. Qur'an, 23:115; See: *Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*: 279-280.

is practical or active wisdom. Theoretical wisdom relates to His knowledge of His essence and His actions, and it is among the essential affirmative attributes, which was discussed in the first chapter. What is intended for discussion in this chapter is practical wisdom in its two meanings: perfection in the creation and management of the world, and the elevation of His actions above what is inappropriate, such as ignorance and foolishness.

The Definition of Justice

Justice (*'adl*) has several uses or meanings in lexicons, such as moderation in affairs, equilibrium and equality, evenness and uprightness, and the middle way between excess and deficiency.[8] The comprehensive meaning among these is placing everything in its appropriate position. This is what Imam Ali (a.s.) referred to when he said: "Justice puts things in their places."[9] To clarify: everything has a specific position that is required either by reason, or by revelation's text, and by consideration of universal and particular benefits in the cosmic system. Justice is the observance of that position and avoiding deviation toward excess or deficiency.

Therefore, everything has its place according to its nature - in one way in the natural order, and in another way in human society. Considering its different instances, it has various divisions that are not appropriate to explain here. However, the instances of justice in relation to God, exalted is He, are gathered into three divisions:

1. Ontological Justice (*al-'adl al-takwīnī*): This is His granting every existent what it deserves and what is appropriate for it in terms of existence, so He does not neglect any receptivity, nor suspend any potential in the realm of emanation and bringing into existence.

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8. See, *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*: 1/51-52; *Aqrab al-Mawārid*: 2/753; *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*: 325.
9. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Wisdom 437.

2. Legislative Justice (*al-ʿadl al-tashrīʿī*): This means that He, exalted is He, does not neglect any obligation that contains human perfection and happiness, and through which their material and spiritual, worldly and otherworldly life is sustained. Similarly, He does not burden any soul beyond its capacity.
3. Retributive Justice (*al-ʿadl al-jazāʾī*): This means that He, exalted is He, does not equate between the reformer and corrupter, or between the believer and disbeliever in the station of recompense. Rather, He recompenses each person according to what they have earned, rewarding the good-doer with goodness and reward, and the evil-doer with punishment. Similarly, He, exalted is He, does not punish a servant for violating obligations except after explanation and communication.

The Correlation Between Wisdom and Justice

Wisdom and justice in action are correlative, for perfecting and making an action precise necessitates it occurring in its appropriate place, just as an action occurring in its appropriate place necessitates it being precise and perfect. Hence we see that the theologians (*mutakallimīn*) follow justice with wisdom in their investigations. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Muʿtazilī said:

"When we describe the Eternal, exalted is He, as just and wise, what is meant is that He does not do what is wrong or choose it, nor does He neglect what is obligatory upon Him, and that all His actions are good."[10]

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd said:

"The Just and Wise One is He who neither commits wrong nor neglects what is obligatory."[11]

And Sadīd al-Dīn al-Ḥimṣī said:

10. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 203.
11. *Al-Nukat al-Iʿtiqādiyya*: 27.

"The discussion of justice is a discussion of His actions Most High, and that they are all good, and His elevation above wrongdoings and above neglecting what is obligatory in His wisdom."[12]

Evidence of God's Justice and Wisdom

Justice and wisdom are among the attributes of perfection, and God Most High, being necessarily existent by His essence, possesses all existential perfections and is elevated above all deficiency and wrong. The Necessarily Existent Most High knows from His essence everything with its causes and reasons, and acts according to the most perfect system for the purpose that His reality necessitates. Thus He is wise in His knowledge and action; He is absolutely wise.[13] The absence of wrong from His actions Most High is demonstrated by the fact that wrong in action, such as injustice, futility and the like, stems either from the doer's ignorance of aspects of goodness and perfection,

or from his need for that action. God Most High knows everything just as He is self-sufficient by essence. This is what al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī pointed to when he said: "His self-sufficiency and knowledge indicate the absence of wrong from His actions Most High."[14] The texts of the Qur'an and Sunna regarding His justice and wisdom Most High are abundant. He Most High said:

"God bears witness that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice."[15]

His saying "maintaining" (*qā'iman*) is either a confirmatory circumstantial expression of God Most High's name, or a circumstantial expression of "He" in the phrase "there is no deity except Him." The intended meaning of His maintaining justice is either absolute, encompassing all levels of justice (in creation, legislation, and recom-

12. *Al-Munqidh min al-Taqlīd*: 1/150.
13. *Al-Asfār al-Arba'a*: 6/368.
14. *Kashf al-Murād*: 420.
15. Qur'an, 3:18.

pense), or specific to creational justice as some have chosen.[16] He Most High said: "And We shall set up the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be wronged in any way."[17]

This refers to His justice Most High in the station of reckoning and recompense.

Among what indicates His justice Most High in legislation is His saying: "We do not burden any soul beyond its capacity."[18]

And His saying: "We have sent Our messengers with clear proofs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that people may maintain justice."[19]

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "Justice is that you do not suspect Him."[20] Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) explained this by saying: "As for justice, it is that you do not attribute to your Creator what He has blamed you for."[21] And the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) said:

"He showed us from His dominion of power and the wonders that the signs of His wisdom spoke of... Thus appeared the innovations brought about by the effects of His craftsmanship and the signs of His wisdom... He determined what He created and perfected its determination... originating creatures whose creation He perfected..."[22]

16. See, *Majma' al-Bayān*: 2/420.
17. Qur'an, 21:47.
18. Qur'an, 23:62.
19. Qur'an, 57:25.
20. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Wisdom 470.
21. *Al-Tawḥīd* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq: Chapter 5, Hadith 1.
22. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Sermon 91.

22

GOOD AND EVIL CAN BE KNOWN BY REASON

It was previously mentioned that the Just and Wise One is He who neither commits what is wrong nor neglects what is good, and belief in the establishment of this attribute for the Creator Most High is based on the doctrine of rational good and evil (*al-taḥsīn wa-l-taqbīḥ al-ʿaqliyyān*). For the meaning of that issue is: there are actions that reason perceives as being good or evil, and it perceives that the Self-Sufficient One is above being characterized by wrong and doing what is inappropriate. Hence, we must investigate this issue in light of reason and the Qur'an, so we say:

The Justice-Affirming School (*al-ʿAdliyya*) held that there are actions that reason perceives from its very core, without assistance from religious law, as being good, and other actions it perceives as being evil likewise. The Ash'aris said: reason has no judgment regarding the goodness and evil of things, so nothing is good except what the Lawgiver deems good, and nothing is evil except what He deems evil. The dispute between the two groups revolves around partial affirmation and universal negation, with the Justice-Affirming School maintaining the former and the Ash'aris the latter.

The Criteria of Good and Evil

There is no doubt that good and evil have a single meaning, but the discussion concerns the criterion by which something is considered good or evil, which varies according to different cases. Several criteria have been mentioned for good and evil, which are:

1. Agreement and disagreement with natural disposition: A beautiful scene is good because it agrees with natural disposition, just as a frightening scene is evil because it conflicts with natural disposition. Similarly, delicious food and gentle sounds are good, while bitter medicine and the braying of a donkey are evil.
2. Conformity and opposition to purpose and benefit: Purpose and benefit can be either personal or species-related. The killing of one's enemy is considered good by the person because it conforms to their purpose, but it is evil for the friends and family of the killed person because it opposes their personal purposes and benefits. This is in the personal realm. As for the species realm, justice is good because it preserves social order and benefits the species, while injustice is evil because it destroys order and opposes the benefit of the species.
3. Being a perfection or deficiency for the soul: Like knowledge and ignorance, where the first adorns it and the second disgraces it. Similarly with courage and cowardice, and other perfections and deficiencies of the soul.
4. What necessitates rational praise or blame of the doer: This is by considering the action in terms of whether it is appropriate to the existential perfection of the rational, free being or represents a deficiency. Reason independently determines its goodness and obligation to do it, or its evil and obligation to avoid it. This is like when reason considers repaying kindness with kindness and

judges it as good, or repaying kindness with evil and judges it as evil. In making these judgments, reason only considers that some actions represent perfection for the living, free being while others represent deficiency, thus judging the first as good and the second as evil.

Determining the Point of Contention

There is no dispute regarding good and evil according to the first and third criteria, which is clear, nor regarding good and evil based on personal purpose and benefit. As for species-related purpose and benefit, many researchers of rational determination of good and evil explain the goodness of justice and benevolence, and the evil of injustice and aggression, by the fact that the first contains general benefit and the second contains general harm. This criterion is, in reality, one of the instances of the fourth criterion, as is evident. For sometimes the praise of the doer for an action and blame for another action is due to species-related benefits and harms. Performing or abstaining from an action for this purpose is considered a perfection or deficiency for the doer. This latter meaning is the point of contention between those who affirm and those who deny.

Evidence of Those Who Affirm and Those Who Deny

A. Evidence of Those Who Affirm:

Those who maintain rational determination of good and evil have presented numerous arguments, of which we will mention two:

The First Evidence: This is what al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī indicated by saying: "And they would be negated absolutely if they were established by religious law."[1] To clarify: If good and evil were determined by reason, such that reason independently perceives the goodness of truthfulness and the evil of lying, then there is no problem in what the Lawgiver reports as good being good, and what He reports as evil

1. *Kashf al-Murād*: 418.

being evil, because reason judges that lying is evil and the Lawgiver is above committing evil.

However, if reason were not independent in this, then if the Lawgiver were to report the goodness or evil of an action, we could not be certain of His truthfulness in order to believe the content of His reports and discover from them the goodness or evil of the action. This is because there would be a possibility that the Lawgiver is not truthful in His reports, since lying, according to this assumption, has not yet been established as evil, and establishing the evil of lying through the Lawgiver's report of its evil would entail circular reasoning.

The Second Evidence: This is what al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī mentioned in his statement:

"If good and evil were determined only by religious law, then nothing would be considered evil from God the Exalted".[2] If this were the case, then it would not be evil for Him to manifest miracles through the hands of liars, and allowing this possibility would close the door to recognizing prophethood. For if any prophet were to display a miracle following their claim to prophethood, it would be impossible to believe them if it were possible for a liar claiming prophethood to display miracles.[3]

Remarkably, al-Faḍl ibn Rūzbahān al-Ashʿarī attempted to respond to this evidence by saying:

"The absence of miracles being manifested through liars is not because it is rationally evil, but because it is contrary to God's customary practice, which runs the course of what is customarily impossible".[4]

Therefore, according to this view, the door to recognizing

2. As previously mentioned in the first evidence regarding the non-establishment of the absolute goodness or badness of an action.

3. *Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq*: 84.

4. *Dalāʾil al-Ṣidq*: 1/369, There are other proofs for establishing the rationality of good and evil that we have omitted for the sake of brevity. The student may refer to *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*: 1/246.

prophethood is not closed because customary knowledge determines the impossibility of such manifestation.

The objection to this is: How did he come to know of this custom and that God does not manifest miracles through liars? If belief were dependent on establishing this custom, then those who denied the prophethood of Noah or those before and after him would be excused in their denial of the prophets' prophethood, since this custom had not been established for them. This is because knowledge of such a custom would only come from repeatedly witnessing miracles through the truthful ones and not through the liars.

B. Evidence of Those Who Deny

The First Evidence: They said: If knowledge of the goodness of benevolence and the evil of aggression were self-evident, there would be no difference between it and knowing that one is half of two. However, experience proves the consequent to be false.

This can be challenged firstly by noting that variation in self-evident perceptions is possible. Primary axioms precede observations, which in turn precede innate knowledge (*fiṭriyyāt*), and so on. The existence of variation among self-evident matters does not negate their self-evidence. This is what al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī referred to when he said:

"Variation in knowledge is possible due to variation in conception".[5]

Secondly: Denying that judgment of an action's goodness or evil is self-evident does not prove it is not rational, for negating the specific does not negate the general. It is possible that reason can independently determine an action's goodness or evil through contemplation and examination. Thus, even if we accept the claimed variation, it does not benefit the denier's position.

The Second Evidence: If goodness and evil were rational, they would not vary – meaning the evil would not become good and the good would not become evil. However, the consequent is false, as lying can sometimes be good and truth-telling can sometimes be evil,

5. *Kashf al-Murād*: 236.

such as when lying saves a prophet from death while truth-telling leads to his death.

If lying were inherently evil, it would not be obligatory or good when used to protect a prophet's life from an oppressor seeking to kill him.[6]

The response to this is: Both lying in the first case and truth-telling in the second case maintain their original status of being evil or good. However, failing to save the prophet is more evil than lying, and saving him is better than truth-telling. Thus, reason dictates abandoning truth-telling and resorting to lying, based on prioritizing the more preferable over the preferable, as prioritizing the less preferable over the more preferable is considered evil by reason.

The Third Evidence: The belief in rational good and evil interferes in the affairs of the Lord of the Worlds, who owns everything including reason itself. He has the right to dispose of His property as He wishes. The necessary consequence of saying that reason can judge the goodness and evil of certain actions is to limit His ownership and power, glory be to Him.

The response to this is that reason does not impose anything upon God Most High, but rather it reveals the prevailing laws governing His actions. Reason first examines God's attributes of perfection, such as His essential self-sufficiency and His essential knowledge and power, then deduces from these His transcendence above committing reprehensible acts. This is similar to how theoretical reason reveals the prevailing laws governing the system of the universe and the natural world.

Upon reflection on what we have mentioned, the weakness of all other arguments used by those who deny rational goodness and evil becomes apparent, and we see no need to mention them or explain their flaws.[7]

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6. *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Qūshjī: 339.

7. For a complete understanding of all Ash'arī proofs, refer to *Al-Qawā'id al-Kalāmiyya*, by the author: 70-83.

Goodness and Evil in the Qur'an

Contemplation of the verses of the Qur'an shows that it affirms reason's independent ability to determine goodness and evil outside the framework of revelation, and then commands what is good and forbids what is evil. Here are some examples of verses in this regard:

"Indeed, God commands justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded."[8]

"Say: My Lord has only forbidden immoralities."[9]

"He commands them what is right and forbids them what is wrong."[10]

These verses clearly express that there are matters described as justice, good conduct, right, immorality, wrong, and oppression before they become subject to commands and prohibitions, and that humans find the characterization of some actions as one of these arising from their very essence, not dependent on religious law. The role of religious law is to confirm reason's perception by commanding good and forbidding evil, and to explain what reason cannot independently determine as good or evil. The following verse indicates this most clearly:

"And when they commit an immorality, they say, 'We found our fathers doing it, and God has ordered us to do it.' Say, 'Indeed, God does not order immorality.'"[11]

It is apparent from this verse that the polytheists were aware of the evil nature of their actions and that they were immoral, but they tried to justify these reprehensible acts either by claiming they were preserving their fathers' ways, which they considered good, or by claiming God had commanded them. However, God Most High corrects their error, saying that God does not command immorality, just as He corrects their error in following their fathers' ways by

8. Qur'an, 16:90.
9. Qur'an, 7:33.
10. Qur'an, 7:157.
11. Qur'an, 7:28.

saying: "Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?"[12]

"Or should We treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should We treat those who fear God like the wicked?"[13]

"Should We treat those who submit like the transgressors? What is wrong with you? How do you judge?"[14]

"Is the reward for good anything but good?"[15]

These verses indicate that God Most High has taken human intuition as a basis for His judgment in matters that reason can determine independently. Humans naturally recognize the reprehensibility of equating, in terms of reward, the corrupt with the righteous, the wicked with the believer, and the criminal with the Muslim. Similarly, they understand the goodness of rewarding good with good. This innate understanding serves as the foundation for reason's judgment regarding the necessity of the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning, so that the two groups may be distinguished and each may be rewarded according to what divine justice and benevolence require.

12. Qur'an, 2:170.
13. Qur'an, 38:28.
14. Qur'an, 68:36-37.
15. Qur'an, 55:60.

23

GOD'S ACTIONS ARE MOTIVATED BY PURPOSES

Among the manifestations of His justice and wisdom is that His actions are free from futility and necessarily associated with purposes and aims. This is one of the issues over which the *'Adliyya* (those who believe in divine justice) and the Ash'aris have disputed, with the former affirming and the latter denying this position.

The *'Adliyya* argued for their claim by stating that an action devoid of purpose and aim is considered pointless and futile, which is among the rationally reprehensible things, and God is above all that is reprehensible. Therefore, His actions must be associated with aims and motivated by purposes.

What is important in this context is to investigate the Ash'aris' evidence for denying that God's actions are motivated by purposes. As for the evidence supporting the *'Adliyya's* theory, it is clear, since this issue – as mentioned before – is a branch of the question of rational good and evil. We say:

The Ash'aris argued for their position by claiming that if His action were for a purpose, He would be inherently imperfect and seeking completion through achieving that purpose, since nothing can serve as a purpose for the doer except what is better for him than

its absence, which is the meaning of perfection.[1] This can be critiqued by noting that the Ash'aris have confused between purposes that benefit the doer and purposes that relate to the action itself. The need for completion is necessary in the first case but not in the second, and those who maintain that His actions are motivated by purposes, aims, motives, and benefits are referring to the second case, not the first.

To clarify: The final cause in human actions is what moves the doer from being a potential actor to an actual one. It precedes the action conceptually and mentally but follows it in existence and actualization. This conception of final cause cannot be applied to God due to His absolute self-sufficiency in essence, attributes, and action. He needs nothing beyond His essence in bringing things into existence, otherwise He would be imperfect in His agency, seeking completion through something beyond His essence, which is incompatible with His absolute self-sufficiency. However, denying final cause in this sense does not mean that His actions do not result in benefits and wisdom that benefit His servants (*'ibād*) and maintain order, because He is a wise agent, and a wise agent only chooses from possible actions what is appropriate to that wisdom and does not do what contradicts or opposes it.[2]

The Qur'an and His Wise Actions

It is surprising how the Ash'aris overlook the explicit texts in this regard. God says: "Did you think that We created you in vain and that you would not be returned to Us?"[3] And He says: "We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in play."[4]

And He says: "We did not create the heavens and the earth and

1. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/202-203.
2. The researcher al-Ṭūsī pointed to this by saying: "The negation of purpose necessitates futility but does not necessitate its return to Him." *Kashf al-Murād*, Purpose 3, Chapter 3, Issue 4.
3. Qur'an, 23:115
4. Qur'an, 44:38

what is between them without purpose. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve, so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire."[5]

And He says: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."[6]

The Philosophers' View on His Actions

One might mistakenly think that the philosophers agree with the Ash'aris in denying purpose and aim in God's actions, but this is completely wrong. Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said:

The philosophers did not deny purpose and aim in any of His actions absolutely. Rather, they only denied in His absolute action[7] and in His primary action a purpose additional to His essence. As for secondary actions and specific, conditional actions, they affirmed for each of them a specific purpose. How could it be otherwise when their books are filled with discussions about the purposes of existents and their benefits....[8]

5. Qur'an, 38:37
6. Qur'an, 51:56
7. What is meant by His absolute action is the contingent world when considered as a whole, and what is meant by His first action is the first emanation.
8. *Al-Asfār*: 7/84

24

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND DIVINE WISDOM

God created the heavens and the earth and what is between them for the benefit of humanity and their use in their livelihood, even though calamities and afflictions contradict and oppose this purpose, and a wise agent does not do what contradicts his purpose. Additionally, God's vast mercy necessitates the removal of calamities and the prevention of evils occurring in the natural world so that life is not difficult for humans and is instead pleasant and agreeable without distress and calamity.

The answer to this objection is based on explaining several matters:

First: Collective Benefits Outweigh Individual Benefits

There is no doubt that human life is social in nature. There are individual benefits and interests, and there are collective social benefits. Sound reason favors collective benefits over individual interests. Therefore, what appears as calamity and evil to some individuals in natural phenomena is, at the same time, inclusive of benefit for the species and society. The judgment that these phenomena are evil and contradict human benefit arises from viewing them from a particular

perspective while ignoring others in the world, making no distinction between those who lived in the past, those who live in the present across different regions of the world, or those who will come to live in them.

Second: The Scarcity and Limitation of Human Knowledge

It is humanity's limited knowledge that leads to making such irregular judgments about events. If one were to acknowledge their meager knowledge and its proportion to what they do not know, they would retreat, saying: "Our Lord, You have not created this in vain."[1]

And they would submit to His words: "And you have not been given of knowledge except a little."[2]

The human who judges calamities as pure evil for humanity with no role in their benefit is like a passerby who sees a bulldozer digging the earth or demolishing a building, raising dust and dirt in the air, and immediately judges it as harmful and evil. They do not realize that this is being done in preparation for building a large hospital that will receive patients, treat the injured, and provide means of treatment and nursing care for those in need. If they were aware of these noble objectives, they would judge differently and would describe that demolition as good, seeing no harm in the bulldozer's noise and rising dust.

Third: Neglect of Higher Human Values

Human life is not merely material; humans also have a spiritual and moral life. Without doubt, success and happiness in this life are the ultimate goals of human creation, and the key to reaching these goals is worship and submission to God, glory be to Him. On this basis, events that cause some disruption in material aspects of life may be a fundamental factor in directing humans toward God as He has said:

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1. Qur'an, 3:191
2. Qur'an, 17:85

"Perhaps you dislike something while God places in it much good."[3]

As will be explained to you.

Fourth: Calamities are Born of Sins and Disobedience

The Qur'an considers humans responsible for many painful events and distressing occurrences in the universe. God said:

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's hands have earned."[4]

And He said:

"If the people of the towns had believed and been God-fearing, We would have opened up for them blessings from heaven and earth. But they denied, so We seized them for what they used to earn."[5]

And He said:

"Whatever affliction befalls you is because of what your hands have earned, and He pardons much."[6]

These and other verses indicate that human actions have a real role in natural and social calamities and evils. However, when a person is struck by misfortune and disaster, they rush to judgment, and instead of looking inward and examining the human factors behind these events and reforming themselves, they consider it contrary to the wisdom of the Creator or His justice and mercy.

The Educational Benefits of Calamities

Now that you understand these principles, let us return to analyzing the benefits of calamities and evils, and we say:

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3. Qur'an, 4:19
4. Qur'an, 30:41
5. Qur'an, 7:96
6. Qur'an, 42:30

1. Calamities as a Means of Unleashing Potential

Trials and calamities are the best means for unleashing potential, advancing sciences, and elevating human life. When humans do not face problems in their lives, their potential remains dormant and does not develop. Rather, its growth and actualization depends on humans encountering calamities and hardships. This truth is indicated in God's words:

"For indeed, with hardship comes ease. Indeed, with hardship comes ease. So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing."[7]

2. Calamities as Warning Bells and a Cause for Return to Truth

The enjoyment of material gifts and immersion in pleasures and desires causes great heedlessness of moral values. The more humans delve into pleasures and blessings, the further they distance themselves from spiritual aspects. This is a truth that every person experiences in their own life and the lives of others, and it can be found throughout history. In the Qur'an, we find explicit mention of the connection between transgression and the feeling of self-sufficiency, as God, the Mighty and Majestic, says:

"Indeed, mankind transgresses when he sees himself self-sufficient."[8]

Therefore, to awaken humans from this heedlessness, there must be a shock and warning bell to remind them and return them to the middle path. Nothing is more beneficial in this regard than some events that disrupt comfortable life with disturbances, so that humans realize their weakness and awaken from the sleep of heedlessness. For this reason, the Qur'an explains that some calamities and misfortunes descend as a reminder and a means of return to God. He says:

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7. Qur'an, 94:5-8
8. Qur'an, 96:6-7

"And We did not send into a city any prophet except that We seized its people with poverty and hardship that they might humble themselves."[9]

And He also says: "And We certainly seized the people of Pharaoh with years of famine and a deficiency in fruits that perhaps they would be reminded."[10]

And He also says: "Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]."[11]

And the Almighty says: "And We tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return [to obedience]."[12]

3. The Wisdom of Calamities in the Lives of the Saints

It is evident from the Qur'an and numerous traditions that trials and tribulations are divine favors in the lives of saints and righteous servants of God, and a condition for their attainment of high stations in the hereafter.

He says:

"Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When is the help of God?' Unquestionably, the help of God is near."[13]

And He also says: "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, Who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to God, and indeed, to Him we will return.' Those

9. Qur'an, 7:94
10. Qur'an, 7:130
11. Qur'an, 30:41
12. Qur'an, 7:168
13. Qur'an, 2:214

are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided."[14]

Hishām ibn Sālim narrated from Abū ʿAbdallāh (a.s.) that he said: "Indeed the people most severely tested are the prophets, then those who follow them, then the next best, and the next best."[15] Sulaymān ibn Khālid narrated from him (a.s.) that he said: "Indeed a servant may have a station with God that he cannot attain except through one of two things: either the loss of his wealth or an affliction in his body."[16] ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Yaʿfūr complained to Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) about the pains that afflicted him - and he was sickly - so he (a.s.) said: "O ʿAbdallāh, if the believer knew what reward he has in calamities, he would wish to be cut with scissors."[17]

To summarize:

Calamities are of two types: individual and collective, or if you prefer, limited and absolute. Human actions play a role in the occurrence of calamities and trials, and they all conform to wisdom and the purpose of creation, for the purpose of creating humans is their attainment of eternal spiritual perfections. These calamities are warning bells for the heedless, expiation for the sins of sinners, and means of elevation and transcendence for the righteous.

This is regarding the otherworldly purpose. As for worldly life, attention must be paid to two matters:

1. Considering the benefits for humanity as a whole dwelling in various parts of the world, without limiting consideration to the benefits of an individual or group of people.
2. Considering what humans achieve when facing problems and hardships in terms of new inventions and discoveries that lead to human wellbeing in material life.

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14. Qur'an, 2:155-157
15. *Al-Kāfī*: vol. 2, Chapter on the Severity of Believer's Trial, Hadith 1
16. Same source: Hadith 23
17. Same source: Hadith 15

25

COMMANDING THE IMPOSSIBLE IS REPREHENSIBLE

Commanding what is beyond the capacity of the one commanded is oppression, and the reprehensibility of oppression is among the primary self-evident principles recognized by practical reason. Therefore, it is impossible for the Wise One to command a servant to do what they are incapable of, regardless of whether the commanded act itself is inherently possible but beyond the servant's capacity - like flying to the sky without means - or whether the act itself is impossible, like fitting a large body into a small one without the small expanding or the large shrinking. This is reason's judgment on the matter.

The Qur'anic verses are also explicit that He does not burden humans beyond their capacity and capability, and never wrongs them in any way.

He says: "God does not burden any soul beyond its capacity."[1]

And the Exalted says: "And your Lord is not unjust to [His] servants."[2]

1. Qur'an, 2:286
2. Qur'an, 41:46

The Ash'arīs and Their Allowance of Commanding the Impossible

Despite these clear proofs, we find that the Ash'arīs allowed for commanding what is impossible, thereby presenting Islamic doctrine as contrary to conscience and sound reason. Regrettably, Orientalists took Islamic beliefs from Ash'arī theologians, leading them to describe these beliefs as contrary to reason and natural disposition because they allow for commanding what is impossible.

The Ash'arīs cited verses which they imagined supported their view, though these verses are far from supporting what they claim. The most prominent verses they cited are two:

The first verse is God's saying: "They were not capable of hearing, nor did they see."[3]

Their argument: The verse explicitly states that those who fabricated lies against God in this world and denied the truth were incapable of hearing God's words and listening to the Prophet's call to truth, even though they were commanded to listen to and accept the truth. Thus, God commanded them to do what they were incapable of.

This can be critiqued: Their incapability does not mean they lacked the capacity from the beginning, but rather they deprived themselves of these blessings through sins, which became the cause of their inability to hear and accept the truth. Numerous texts from verses and hadith confirm that disobedience and transgression make hearts blind and ears deaf.

He says: "So when they deviated, God caused their hearts to deviate."[4]

He says regarding the criminals:

"And they will say, 'If we had listened or reasoned, we would not have been among the companions of the Blaze.'"[5]

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3. Qur'an, 11:20
4. Qur'an, 61:5
5. Qur'an, 67:10-11

Their statement "If we had listened or reasoned" along with their admission of being sinners indicates that they were capable of doing so. If they had not been capable, it would have been more appropriate in their excuse to say: "We were not capable of listening or reasoning, so we do not admit to any sins." Al-Zamakhsharī excellently explained this verse by saying:

"It means that due to their extreme aversion to listening to the truth and their hatred for it, it was as if they were unable to hear... People in every language say: 'This is speech I cannot bear to hear.'"[6]

The second verse is His saying:

"The Day the shin will be uncovered and they are invited to prostration but they will not be able to."[7]

Their argument: God calls the misguided and transgressors to prostrate on the Day of Resurrection even though they are unable to respond and perform the prostration. So if it is permissible to impose what is beyond capability in the Hereafter, it must be permissible in this world.

This can be critiqued: The Day of Resurrection is the realm of reckoning and recompense, not the realm of obligation and action. His call on that Day is not for the purpose of obligation and action, but rather to rebuke the transgressors and create regret in them for abandoning prostration in this world despite being capable of it, as He says: "Though they used to be called to prostrate while they were sound."[8]

Similar to this verse is His saying, glory be to Him:

"Then produce a chapter like it and call upon your witnesses other than God, if you are truthful."[9]

6. *Al-Kashshāf*: 2/386
7. Qur'an, 68:42
8. Qur'an, 68:43
9. Qur'an, 2:23

26

THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE GRACE (LUṬF) ACCORDING TO THE THEOLOGIANS

Among the implications of His wisdom is the necessity of divine grace (*luṭf*) upon Him, glory be to Him. Grace according to the theologians refers to that which brings the obligated servant closer to obedience and distances them from disobedience. If this grace is connected to the occurrence of obligation, it is called "actualizing grace" (*luṭf muḥaṣṣil*), and if not, it is called "approximating grace" (*luṭf muqarrib*). Al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā said:

"Grace is that which calls to performing acts of obedience, and it is divided into that which causes the obligated servant to choose the act of obedience when otherwise they would not have chosen it, and that which brings them closer to choosing it. Both types are included in it being a caller [to obedience]."[1]

The Proof for the Necessity of Divine Grace

They argued for the necessity of grace upon Him by saying that abandoning grace contradicts His exalted purpose in creating servants and

1. *Al-Dhakhīra fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*: 186

obligating them, and this is reprehensible and cannot issue from the Wise One. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī said: If neglecting it were permissible in wisdom, then supposing the Wise One did not do it, it would contradict His purpose, but since the consequent is false, so too is the antecedent.

Explanation of the correlation: He wanted obedience from the obligated servant. So when He knows that they will not choose obedience, or will not be closer to it except through an act He does for them that involves no hardship or diminishment, wisdom necessitates that He do it. For if He were to neglect it, this would reveal His lack of desire for it. This is analogous to someone who wants another to attend their meal and knows or strongly suspects they will not attend without a messenger - if they do not send one, they are considered to be contradicting their purpose.

Explanation of the falsity of the consequent: The rational people consider contradiction of purpose to be foolishness, which is contrary to wisdom and a deficiency, and deficiency is impossible for Him.[2]

Conditions of Divine Grace

Those who maintain the necessity of grace mention two conditions for it:

First: It must not play a role in enabling and producing capability, since one who is incapable is not obligated, so grace cannot be conceived in their case.

Second: It must not reach the level of compulsion nor remove choice from the obligated servant, lest it contradict the wisdom in establishing obligation for testing (*ibtilā'*) and examining servants.

In light of the latter condition, the weakness becomes clear in the objection raised against the necessity of grace, which claims that if grace were obligatory upon God the Exalted, there would be no disobedient person in the world, because for every obligated servant,

2. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 117-118

God the Exalted is capable of graces which, if done for them, would make them choose what is obligatory and avoid what is reprehensible. This is because although God's power is absolute in itself, its implementation is restricted by what does not contradict the requirements of His wisdom that humans be choosing agents and obligated servants.[3]

Types of Divine Grace

Divine grace (*luṭf*) is either from God's action, which His wisdom necessitates He do - like sending prophets - otherwise neglecting it would be considered contradicting His purpose as previously mentioned; or it is from the action of the obligated servant. In the latter case, it is either grace in their own obligation - in which case His wisdom necessitates that He make it known to them and make it obligatory upon them, such as following the messengers and taking them as examples - or it is grace in the obligation of others, such as the messenger conveying revelation. In this case, it must include a benefit that returns to its doer, since making it obligatory upon them for the benefit of others while being devoid of any benefit returning to them would be injustice, which is impossible for Him.[4]

3. See: *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 523
4. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 118; *Irshād al-Ṭālibīn ilā Nahj al-Mustarshidīn*: 278

27

COMPULSION (JABR) AND ACQUISITION (KASB)

Among the important theological discussions is the investigation of how servants' actions come about, and whether they have free choice in their actions or are compelled and forced to do them. This issue is closely connected to the question of divine justice, as self-evident reason judges that it is reprehensible to impose obligations on one who is compelled and then hold them accountable for it, and that God is above every reprehensible act.

This is one of the intellectual issues that every person seeks to resolve, whether they are capable of it or not. Due to this characteristic, it is not possible to determine when it first emerged in human societies. Nevertheless, it was discussed in Greek philosophy, then arose in Islamic circles where it was investigated by Muslim theologians and philosophers, just as it has been discussed in modern Western societies. There are four schools of thought and opinions on this topic in Islamic theology:

1. Pure compulsion (*jabr maḥḍ*)
2. Acquisition (*kasb*)
3. Delegation (*tafwīḍ*)

4. The matter between the two matters (*amr bayn al-amrayn*)

Let us examine them one after another.

Pure Compulsion

This is attributed to Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128 AH/746 CE). Al-Ashʿarī said:

"Jahm was unique in certain matters, including: that no one has any real action except God alone, and that people's actions are only attributed to them metaphorically, just as one says: 'The tree moved,' 'The celestial sphere rotated,' and 'The sun set.'"[1]

Al-Shahrastānī defined them as saying:

"They say that humans are not capable of anything and cannot be described as having ability. Rather, they are compelled in their actions, having no power, will, or choice. God the Exalted creates actions in them just as He creates in other inanimate objects... And when compulsion is established, obligation too becomes compulsion."[2] There is no doubt about the invalidity of this doctrine, for if it were true, religious obligation, promise, threat, reward and punishment would all be nullified. The sending of prophets and revelation of divine books and laws would become futile. God is far above that in His great transcendence.

The Theory of Acquisition (*kasb*)

The theory of acquisition (*kasb*) emerged in theological debates more than a century before the appearance of al-Ashʿarī. The Ḍirāriyya group[3] said:

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1. *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*: 1/312
2. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/87
3. They are the followers of Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr, who appeared during the time of Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ (died 131 AH).

"The actions of servants are truly created by God the Exalted, while the servant acquires them."[4]

The Najjāriyya group[5] followed them in this, and al-Shahrastānī defined them as saying:

"The Creator, exalted is He, is the creator of servants' actions - their good and evil, their beautiful and ugly - while the servant acquires them. They establish an effect for temporal power, and they call this acquisition."[6] Nevertheless, the theory became famously associated with the Ashʿarīs and was considered one of their methodological distinctions, only because al-Ashʿarī and his school's students worked to strengthen this theory and explain it through rational and scriptural evidence. Their expressions differed in explaining it, but they come down to two points:

1. Temporal power (the servant's power) has a kind of effect in acquiring the action, but not in its existence and occurrence - rather in the incidental characteristics that apply to it.
2. Temporal power has no effect on the action except its coincidence with the action's realization from His side, glory be to Him.

Here are their texts on this matter:

Al-Bāqillānī's Explanation

Al-Bāqillānī has an explanation of al-Ashʿarī's theory of acquisition (*kasb*) which aligns with the first perspective, where he said:

"Evidence has established that temporal power cannot create existence, but the attributes of actions, their aspects, and considera-

4. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* by al-Shahrastānī: 1/90-91
5. They are the followers of al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Najjār, who had debates with al-Naẓẓām, died in 230 AH.
6. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/89, paraphrased

tions are not limited to merely coming into existence. Rather, there are other aspects beyond mere existence."

He then mentioned several aspects and considerations, such as prayer, fasting, standing, and sitting, and said:

"Humans necessarily distinguish between our saying 'brought into existence' and our saying 'prayed,' 'fasted,' 'sat,' and 'stood.' Just as it is not permissible to attribute to God what is attributed to the servant, likewise it is not permissible to attribute to the servant what is attributed to God the Exalted."[7] He then concluded that the aspects which cannot properly be attributed to God the Exalted are connected to temporal power and are acquired by humans, and these are what determine reward and punishment.

The following observations can be made about this: These titles and aspects must fall into one of two categories:

Either they are non-existential matters, in which case acquisition has no external reality but is merely a mental construct outside the scope of action and influence - so how can temporal power affect it such that it would be considered the servant's acquisition and serve as the basis for reward and punishment?

Or they are existential matters, in which case they would be created by God according to your accepted principle (of the creation of actions).

Al-Ghazālī's Explanation

Al-Ghazālī explained acquisition (*kasb*) in accordance with the second perspective, where he said:

"The truth lies in affirming two powers over a single act and maintaining that one effect can be attributed to two agents. What remains is only the improbability of two powers converging on a single act, and this is only improbable when the two powers are related in the same way. If the two powers differ and their modes of

7. *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/97-98

relation differ, then the convergence of two differently related powers on one thing is not impossible."

The essence of what he mentioned regarding the difference in how the two powers relate is: God's power relates to the servant's action through a relationship of effectuation (*ta'thīrī*), while the servant's own power relates through a relationship of conjunction (*taqārunī*), and this degree of relation is sufficient for attributing the action to him and considering it his acquisition.[8] Several of their later scholars followed him in this view, such as al-Taftāzānī, al-Jurjānī, and al-Qūshjī.[9]

The following observation can be made about this: According to this explanation, the servant's role in his actions is merely one of conjunction, so when power and will occur in the servant, God creates the action. It is known that the occurrence of an action from God coinciding with the servant's power does not validate attributing the action's occurrence to the servant. Given this, how can the servant bear responsibility for it when his power has no effect on its occurrence?

Denial of Acquisition by Ash'arī Scholars

There were men among the Ash'arīs who recognized the inadequacy of the theory and that it was not a correct solution to the problem of determinism. They rejected what had been established and openly declared the truth. We specifically mention three men:

First: Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, who acknowledged first the system of causes and effects in the universe, second their ultimate attribution to God, the absolutely self-sufficient, who is the creator of causes and their effects, and third that the servants' power has an

8. See: *Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*: 47

9. See: *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya*: 117; *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/146 and *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Qūshjī: 345

effect on their actions, while their power ultimately derives from God's power.[10]

Second: Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, one of the authorities in hadith and theology in the tenth century, who agreed with Imām al-Ḥaramayn in this regard and said:

"Whoever claims that the servant has no action is obstinate, for if temporal power (*qudra ḥāditha*) had no effect, its existence and non-existence would be equal. And whoever claims independence in action has committed polytheism, so one must be compelled to choose."[11]

Third: Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh, who said in a lengthy discourse:

"Among them are those who claim the servant's authority over all his actions and absolute independence (meaning the Muʿtazilites) - which is obvious delusion. And among them are those who affirmed determinism openly (meaning the pure determinists), and those who affirmed it while disavowing its name (meaning the Ashʿarīs) - which destroys religious law, nullifies obligations, and invalidates self-evident reason, which is the pillar of faith.

The claim that believing in the servant's acquisition (*kasb*)[12] of his actions leads to polytheism with God - which is the greatest injustice - is a claim made by one who has not understood the meaning of polytheism as presented in the Qur'an and Sunna. Polytheism is the belief that something other than God has an effect beyond the apparent causes God has granted, and that something has authority over what is beyond created beings' capacity..."[13]

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10. See: His exact words in *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/98-99 and this is more precisely the choice of the philosophers and all Imamites.

11. *Al-Yawāqīt wa-l-Jawāhir fī Bayān ʿAqīdat al-Akābir*, 139-141.

12. By "earning" he means creation and bringing into existence, not the technical meaning of earning used by the Ashʿarites, as is clear to anyone who examines his words.

13. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 59-62.

28

THE THEORY OF DELEGATION (TAFWĪḌ)

What is reported from the Mu'tazilites is that the actions of servants (*'ibād*) are delegated to them and they are the doers of these actions through the power that God has granted them, and that God has no involvement in the actions of His servants. Judge 'Abd al-Jabbār said:

"Our teacher Abū 'Alī, may God have mercy on him, mentioned: The people of justice agree that the actions of servants, including their movements, standing, and sitting, originate from them, and that God, the Mighty and Majestic, has enabled them to do so, and there is no doer or originator of these actions other than them."[1] He also said:

"Chapter on the creation of actions, and its purpose is to discuss that the actions of servants are not created within them and that they are the originators of these actions."[2]

The Mu'tazilites' motivation for advocating delegation (*tafwīḍ*) was to preserve divine justice. Since justice was their fundamental principle in all discussions, they applied it to the question of human

1. *Al-Mughnī fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, 6/41, on Will.
2. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, 323.

actions, falling into delegation because they believed that considering servants' actions as created by God contradicted His justice, thus limiting His creation and authority. Two factors led them into this error:

First: Their mistake in explaining how actions relate to both humans and God, as they assumed these were mutually exclusive relationships that could not coexist. Since they were committed to upholding divine justice, they resorted to delegation and denied the connection of actions to God. Judge ʿAbd al-Jabbār said:

"Whoever says that God is the creator and originator of servants' actions has made a grave error."[3]

This can be critiqued: Humans have no independence, neither in their existence nor in their actions and existential affairs. They need God to bestow existence and power upon them throughout their lives. God says:

"O people, you are the ones in need of God, and God is the Self-sufficient, the Praiseworthy."[4]

Second: Their failure to distinguish between existential and legislative will and decree. The existential encompasses both good and evil deeds without distinction, while the legislative only relates to good deeds. God says: "God does not command immorality,"[5] and "Say: My Lord has commanded justice."[6]

The verses revealed concerning God's transcendence above injustice and evil deeds either relate to His actions, indicating that He is absolutely above committing evil acts, or they relate to the actions of servants (*ʿibād*), indicating that He does not approve of them or command them, but rather dislikes them and forbids them. Thus, the distinction between good and evil actions of servants is only complete in relation to legislative will and decree, not existential ones. This is the doctrine of the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.).

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3. *Al-Mughnī*, 6/41, on Will.
4. Qur'an, 35:15.
5. Qur'an, 7:28.
6. Qur'an, 7:29.

Al-Ṣadūq reported through his chain from al-Riḍā from his forefathers from al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī (a.s.) who said: I heard my father ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) say:

"Actions are of three types: obligations, virtuous acts, and sins. As for obligations, they are by God's command, with His pleasure, His decree, His determination, His will, and His knowledge. As for virtuous acts, they are not by His command, but with His pleasure, His decree, His determination, His will, and His knowledge. As for sins, they are not by His command, but by His decree, His determination, His will, and His knowledge, then He punishes for them."[7]

Abū Baṣīr said: I asked Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.): "Did He will and want disbelief for them?" He said: "Yes." I asked: "Did He love and approve of that?" He said: "No." I asked: "He willed and wanted what He did not love and approve of?" He said: "This is how it has come to us."[8]

There are other such narrations, and their meaning, as you can see, is the separation between existential and legislative will, meaning divine approval. Although sins are not approved by God and He does not command them, they only occur through God's existential decree, determination, knowledge, and will.

The Invalidity of Delegation in the Qur'an and Sunna

The Qur'an refutes delegation clearly and emphatically:

God says: "O people, you are the ones in need of God, and God is the Self-sufficient, the Praiseworthy."[9]

And He says: "But they cannot harm anyone through it except by God's permission."[10]

And He says: "How many a small group has overcome a large group by God's permission."[11]

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7. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 5/29, quoted from *Al-Tawḥīd*, *Al-Khiṣāl* and *Al-ʿUyūn*.
8. Same source, 121, quoted from *Al-Maḥāsin*.
9. Qur'an, 35:15.
10. Qur'an, 2:102.
11. Qur'an, 2:249.

And He says: "No soul can die except by God's permission."[12]

And there are many other verses that condition human action upon His permission, meaning His existential permission and absolute will.

As for the Sunna, numerous narrations from the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.) criticize the theory of delegation (*tafwīḍ*), while the Mu'tazilites were defenders and promoters of this theory in their time.

Al-Ṣadūq reported in *al-Amālī* from Hishām who said: Abū 'Abd Allāh (a.s.) said: "We affirm neither compulsion nor delegation."[13]

In *al-Iḥtijāj*, from Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī who said: Abū Ja'far (a.s.) said to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: "Beware of advocating delegation, for God, the Mighty and Majestic, did not delegate authority to His creation out of weakness and feebleness, nor did He compel them to disobey Him out of injustice."[14]

In *al-'Uyūn*, from al-Riḍā (a.s.) who said: "Poor Qadarites[15], they wanted to describe God, the Mighty and Majestic, through His justice, but they removed Him from His power and authority."[16]

12. Qur'an, 10:100.
13. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 5/4, Book of Justice and Resurrection, Hadith 1.
14. Previous source, 17, Hadith 26.
15. The Qadarites were the predecessors of the Mu'tazilites who denied divine predestination regarding the voluntary actions of servants.
16. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 5/54, Book of Justice and Resurrection, Hadith 93.

29

THE MIDDLE POSITION (AL-AMR BAYN AL-AMRAYN)

You have learned that the determinists (*mujabbira*) inclined toward compulsion to preserve divine unity in actions and confine creation to God alone, just as the delegationists (*mufawwiḍa*) sided with delegation to preserve His justice. Both groups overlooked a third theory supported by reason and reinforced by the Qur'an and Sunna, which preserves both principles of divine unity and justice while being free from the complications of the two positions. This is the doctrine of the middle position between two positions (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*) originated by the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.). It is the chosen view of Islamic philosophers and Imami theologians. Understanding this theory depends on knowing two rational principles that have been demonstrated in metaphysics, which are:

1. The existence of the effect is identical to its connection to its cause

The dependence of the effect on its cause is not like the dependence of an accident on its subject or a substance on its locus. Rather, its dependence on it refers to a subtle meaning that resembles the

dependence of the prepositional meaning (*al-ma'nā al-ḥarfī*) on the nominal meaning (*al-ma'nā al-ismī*) in three stages: conception, signification, and actualization. When you say: "I traveled from Basra to Kufa," there are nominal meanings which are the travel, Basra, and Kufa, and a prepositional meaning which is the travel's beginning from Basra and ending at Kufa. The beginning and ending that are understood from the words "from" and "to" lack independence in the realm of conception, as they cannot be conceived independently and separately from the conception of Basra and Kufa. Otherwise, the prepositional meaning would become a nominal meaning and would be like saying: "Beginning is better than ending."

Similarly, they lack independence in the realm of signification, as they do not signify anything when separated from their objects. They also lack independence in terms of actualization and existence, as the prepositional beginning has no independent existence separate from what it relates to, just as the prepositional ending has no such existence.

In light of this, the status of contingent existence (*al-wujūd al-imkānī*), through which things are manifested and quiddities are actualized, becomes clear. Its relation to the Necessary Being is no different from the relation of the prepositional meaning to the nominal meaning, because describing existence as contingent only means the dependence of the possible being's existence and its connection to its necessitating cause. The description of contingency is not external to its identity and reality; rather, poverty and connection are identical to its reality. Otherwise, if it were self-sufficient in its essence and then poverty occurred to it accidentally, this would lead to contradiction.

2. The Unity of the Reality of Existence Necessitates the Universality of Effect

It has likewise been established in metaphysics that the nature of necessary existence and contingent existence is one, united by a common element which is existence and the negation of non-exis-

tence and what that entails. The concept of existence applies to both with a single designation and a unified meaning.

In light of this principle, if reality at one of the higher levels has a particular effect, that effect must exist in the lower levels, based on the unity of reality. Yes, the effect in terms of intensity and weakness follows its source in this respect. Since necessary existence is stronger and more intense, knowledge, perception, life, and effect within it are likewise. And since existence in contingent being is weaker, its effect is correspondingly weaker.

When you grasp these two principles, you will understand the middle position in this matter: that it is impossible to conceive of the servant's action as independent from the Necessary Being, self-sufficient, and not subsisting through it, in accordance with the first principle. This clarifies the invalidity of the doctrine of absolute delegation (*tafwīḍ*). Similarly, it is impossible to deny the role of the servant and other causes in their effects, in accordance with the second principle. This demonstrates the invalidity of the doctrine of determinism (*jabr*) in actions and the denial of effect from temporal power.

Thus, the action is attributed to the Necessary Being from one perspective and to the servant from another perspective. The action is not solely His action such that it would be completely disconnected from the servant, with the servant's role being merely that of a locus and vessel for the action's manifestation. Nor is it solely the servant's action such that it would be disconnected from the Necessary Being. This view contains the beauty of unity in action (*tawḥīd af'ālī*) free from determinism, just as it contains the merits of justice free from the consequence of polytheism (*shirk*) and dualism (*thanawiyya*).

Clarification and Illustration

This is a summary of the theory according to what philosophical proofs lead to. To clarify it, we present an example: If we suppose a person with a trembling hand who lacks power, and someone ties a sharp sword to his trembling hand knowing that the bound sword

will fall upon another and kill him, and when the sword falls and kills, the killing is attributed to the one who tied the sword to his hand, not to the owner of the hand who was powerless to control it - this is an example of what the determinist (*jabrī*) maintains regarding human actions.

If we suppose that a man gave a sword to someone who has control over his hand's movement and the execution of his will, and he kills someone with it, the matter is reversed - the killing is attributed to the direct perpetrator, not to the one who gave the sword. This is an example of what the proponent of absolute delegation (*tafwīḍī*) believes regarding human actions.

However, if we suppose a person with a paralyzed hand (not trembling) who cannot move except when another person connects electrical current to him, giving his muscles strength and activity, with the electrical wire's end being in that person's hand such that if he lifts his hand at any moment, the power would be cut off from this person's body. Then this person goes and kills someone by his own choice, while the other person knows what he did. In such a case, the action is attributed to both of them. As for attribution to the direct perpetrator, it is because he acted by his own choice and exercise of power. As for attribution to the one providing the connection, it is because he enabled him and gave him the ability even during the act and engagement in killing, and he was capable of cutting off power from him at any moment he wished and willed. This is an example of the theory of the matter between the two matters (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*). The human being in every state needs the bestowal of power and life from the Exalted to him, such that if this emanation were cut off for a single moment, life and power would cease. So during the action, one acts with power bestowed from Him and life likewise, with no difference between inception and continuation.

The outcome of this illustration is that the action proceeding from the servant has two real relations: first, its relation to its immediate agent considering its proceeding from him by his choice and exercise of power; and second, its relation to God the Exalted consid-

ering that He is the giver of life and power at every moment continuously, even at the moment of engagement in the action.[1]

The Middle Position in the Qur'an and the Tradition

If the meaning of the matter between the two matters (*al-amr bayn al-amrayn*) is the existence of two relations and attributions in the servant's action - a relation to God and a relation to the servant, without one conflicting with the other - then we find these two relations in verses of the Wise Remembrance:

His statement, glory be to Him: "And you did not throw when you threw, but it was God who threw".[2]

You see that the Qur'an attributes the throwing to the Prophet, while at the same time negating it from him and attributing it to God.

He said: "Fight them; God will punish them at your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people".[3]

It is apparent that what is meant by punishment here is killing, because the punishment coming from God through the hands of the believers is nothing but that, not the punishment of the intermediate realm (*barzakhī*) nor the hereafter, as these two return to God not to the believers. Thus, He has attributed a single action to both the believers and their Creator.

The Qur'an condemns the Children of Israel for their hardheartedness, saying:

"Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones...".[4]

The blame and condemnation would only be valid if they them-

1. This example was mentioned by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Khū'ī (may his soul be sanctified) in his valuable annotations on *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt* and his lectures to his students. See: *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt*, 1/90 and *Al-Muḥāḍarāt*, 2/87-88. There are other examples to explain the theory of the matter between the two matters, see: *Tafsīr al-Mīzān*, 1/100 and *Al-Asfār*, 6/377-388.
2. Qur'an, 8:17.
3. Qur'an, 9:14.
4. Qur'an, 2:74.

selves were the cause of this condition arising in their hearts, while at the same time, He attributes the occurrence of hardness to God the Exalted and says:

"So for their breaking of their covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard".[5]

The details of this have already been discussed in the research on divine unity in creation.

This is what pertains to the Wise Book. As for the traditions, we will mention a small portion of what Shaykh al-Ṣadūq has collected in his *Tawḥīd* and ʿAllāma al-Majlisī in his *Biḥār*:

Al-Ṣadūq narrated from Abū Jaʿfar and Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) that they said: "God, the Mighty and Majestic, is more merciful to His creation than to compel them to sin and then punish them for it. And God is more mighty than to will something and it not come to be."

They were asked: "Is there a third position between compulsion (*jabr*) and free will (*qadar*)?" They replied: "Yes, broader than what is between heaven and earth".[6]

He narrated with a sound chain from al-Riḍā (a.s.) that he said: "God, the Mighty and Majestic, is not obeyed through coercion, nor disobeyed through being overpowered, nor has He neglected the servants in His kingdom. He is the Owner of what He has given them ownership over, and the Enabler of what He has enabled them to do. If the servants proceed with His obedience, He does not prevent or obstruct them from it. And if they proceed with disobedience and He wills to intervene between them and that act, He does so. But if He does not intervene and they do it, He is not the one who made them do it".[7]

He also narrated from al-Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) who said: "There is neither compulsion nor delegation (*tafwīḍ*), but rather a matter between two matters."

He said: I asked, "What is the matter between two matters?" He

5. Qurʾan, 5:13.
6. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 59, Hadith 7.
7. Previous source, Hadith 8.

replied: "It is like when you see someone committing a sin and you forbid him but he does not desist, so you leave him and he commits that sin. When he did not accept your advice and you left him, you are not the one who commanded him to sin".[8]

Imam al-Hādī (a.s.) has a detailed epistle refuting the people of compulsion and delegation, and establishing justice and the matter between two matters, which was transmitted by ʿAlī ibn Shuʿba (may he be sanctified) in *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, and Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ṭabrisī (may he be sanctified) in *al-Iḥtijāj*. Among what came in it regarding the explanation of the reality of the matter between two matters, is his statement: "And this statement between the two statements is neither compulsion nor delegation, and this is what the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) informed ʿAbāya ibn Ribʿī al-Asadī when he asked him about the capability by which one stands, sits, and acts. The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) said to him:

"You asked about capability - do you possess it without God or with God?" ʿAbāya remained silent, so the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) said to him: "Speak, O ʿAbāya." He said: "What should I say?" He (a.s.) said: "...Say that you possess it through God who grants you possession of it. If He grants it to you, that is from His giving, and if He takes it away from you, that is from His trial. He is the Owner of what He has given you ownership over, and the Enabler of what He has enabled you to do".[9]

Among those who acknowledged the matter between two matters was the Shaykh of al-Azhar at his time, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, in his treatise on divine unity, where he said:

"The divine law has established two great matters, which are the pillars of happiness and the foundation of human actions. First: that the servant earns through his will and capability what leads to his happiness. Second: that God's power is the source of all beings, and among its effects is that which can intervene between the servant and the execution of what he wants...

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8. Previous source, Hadith 8.
9. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 5/75, Chapter Two, Hadith 1.

God has charged him to raise his determination to seek help from Him alone after he has expended all his effort in correcting his thought and perfecting his action. This that we have established was discovered by the predecessors of the community, and among the later scholars of theoretical investigation, Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (may God have mercy on him) relied upon it, even though some who did not understand him criticized him for it".[10]

10. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 57-62, summarized.

30

OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES

Here we have completed our study of the schools of thought and opinions on the issue of compulsion and free will. Now there are objections and doubts that we must study and answer:

1. God's Eternal Knowledge

They said: "Whatever God knows will not exist among the servant's actions is impossible to occur from the servant, otherwise knowledge could turn into ignorance. And whatever God knows will exist among his actions must necessarily occur from the servant, otherwise that transformation would be possible, which is impossible regarding Him, glory be to Him. This invalidates the servant's free will, as there is no power over what is necessary or impossible. It also invalidates religious obligation, since it is based on capability and free will. Thus, what applies to those who believe in the creation of actions also applies to others due to their belief in His eternal knowledge concerning things".[1]

1. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/155, our summary.

The answer to this is: His eternal knowledge is not related to the occurrence of every action from its doer in an absolute way. Rather, His knowledge relates to its occurrence according to the specific characteristics present in it. In light of this, His eternal knowledge relates to heat emanating from fire in a compelled and necessary way, just as His eternal knowledge relates to trembling from one who trembles likewise. However, His knowledge relates to the voluntary action of humans occurring from them with the qualification of choice and freedom, and such knowledge confirms free will. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī said:

"Eternal knowledge relates to everything as it actually is. It relates to voluntary actions as voluntary actions, so it is impossible for them to become involuntary..."[2]

2. God's Eternal Will

They said: "Whatever God wills to exist among the servant's actions definitely occurs, and whatever God wills not to exist among them definitely does not occur, so he has no power over either of them".[3] The answer to this is: This argument is the same as the previous one but with will substituted for knowledge, so the answer to it is clear from what we mentioned in response to its predecessor. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī said:

"The divine will relates to the action emanating from Zayd, for example, not absolutely, but rather in terms of it being a voluntary action emanating from such an agent, at such a time and place. Therefore, the effect of the divine will on the action necessitates the action being voluntary, otherwise the object of will would not be fulfilled... The error of the determinists lies in their failure to distinguish how the divine will relates to action..."[4]

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2. *Al-Asfār*, 6/318, annotation by ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī (may his soul be sanctified).
3. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/156.
4. *Al-Mīzān*, 1/99-100.

3. The Necessity of Action with an External Determining Factor Beyond Mere Choice

They said: "If the servant were the originator of his action through his power, he must be able to both perform and abstain from it, otherwise he would not be capable of it, since one who is capable must be able to do either. Based on this, the preference of his action over abstaining from it depends on a determining factor (*murajjiḥ*), otherwise one of two possible alternatives would occur without a determining factor or cause, which is impossible. If this determining factor were from the servant and by his choice, it would lead to an invalid infinite regress, because we would then apply the same argument to the occurrence of that determining factor from the servant, which would require a second determining factor, and so on...

And if it were from other than him and outside his choice, then since the action must occur when the determining factor is present, and it is assumed that this determining factor is also outside his choice, the action emanating from the servant becomes necessarily occurring and not voluntary for him".[5]

The answer to this is: The emanation of voluntary action from a human depends on prerequisites and principles including conceptualizing something, affirming its benefit, desiring to attain it, and other such prerequisites. However, these prerequisites are not sufficient for the action to occur and emanate from him except through the occurrence of psychological will (*irāda nafsāniyya*) through which the human is driven toward action, and with it the action becomes necessary to occur and its abandonment becomes impossible.

The determining factor is nothing beyond the agent's motive and will, and is based only on the human self and essence, for it is the principle for its appearance in consciousness. The discussion is only about whether it is a volitional action of the self or not. Whoever makes the criterion for actions being volitional their being preceded by will falls into difficulty regarding will itself, because its being

5. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/149-150, summarized and adapted.

preceded by another will necessitates an infinite regress of unlimited wills, which is impossible.

As for the chosen view, that the criterion for actions being volitional is their being an action of an agent whose choice is identical to their identity and emerges from their very essence and is not something additional to their identity occurring to it, there is absolutely no problem. Human agency in relation to their volitional actions is like this, for God created the human soul as choosing, and based on this it is impossible to strip from it the attribute of choice and for it to be a compelled agent like natural agents.

4. Making Knowledge of God an Obligation Would be Imposing the Impossible

They said: "There is consensus that the obligation of knowing God, exalted is He, exists. If the obligation occurs in the state of having knowledge, it would be an obligation to attain what is already attained, which is impossible. And if it occurs in the state of its absence, then one who does not know the obligator and His attributes that are needed for the validity of obligation from Him is unaware of the obligation, and obligating the unaware is imposing the impossible."[6]

The answer to this is: We accept the first part of the argument, but not in the sense of detailed knowledge that would make it an attainment of what is already attained, rather in the sense of general knowledge that motivates the acquisition of detailed knowledge from it.

To clarify: The obligation to know God Most High is a rational obligation, for which a general awareness that there is a benefactor whose knowledge, names, and attributes must be known is sufficient, either in gratitude for His blessings or to prevent potential harm.

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6. *Al-Mīzān*, 1/99-100.

5. Nothing Exists Except Through Prior Necessity

It has been established in the science of metaphysics that a contingent being does not come into existence and its existence is not determined until its existence becomes necessary through its cause. This is because a contingent being in itself does not necessitate either existence or non-existence. Therefore, there must be an external factor that necessitates its existence for it to emerge from this state into the level of existence. Then, does what necessitates its existence also necessitate its necessity or not? In the first case, its existence becomes necessary, and in the second case, since its remaining in non-existence is not yet impossible, one may ask: why did it acquire existence rather than non-existence? This question cannot be resolved except by the contingent's existence becoming necessary and its remaining in non-existence becoming impossible. This is the meaning of their statement: "A thing does not exist until it becomes necessary."

This is the proof of the principle, and upon it was based the doctrine of determinism (*jabr*), because the servant's action is contingent and thus only issues from him after acquiring necessity, and necessity contradicts free choice.

The answer to this is: The principle only demonstrates that the effect is realized through the necessity that precedes its existence, but does this necessity come from the agent and cause, or from something else? If the agent has free choice, then both the existence of the action and its preceding necessity emanate from it through choice, and if the agent is compelled, like natural agents, they emanate from it through compulsion.

In summary: Although the necessity mentioned in the principle is a quality that precedes the action, it comes after the agent. Therefore, what can be derived from it is only that the action is necessitated (*mūjab*) (with fatḥa), while the agent may be either necessitated or necessitating (*mūjib*) (with kasra). If we establish that humans have free choice, this principle does not contradict it in the slightest.

31

DIVINE DECREE AND PREDESTINATION (AL-QAḌĀ WA AL-QADAR')

Divine decree (*qaḍā'*) and destiny (*qadar*) are among the Islamic principles found in the Qur'an and Sunna, and no one familiar with these two primary sources can deny them or deny either one of them. However, the challenge lies in clarifying what is meant by them, as this is the major pitfall in this context. A comprehensive investigation requires explaining several matters:

Definition of Divine Decree and Predestination

Ibn Fāris said:

Qadar - with fatḥa or sukūn on the dāl - means the extent, essence, and limit of something. Regarding God's words: "And for whom his provision is restricted"[1], its meaning is that it was made scarce, and by analogy it means he was given that in a small measure.[2] He also said:

Qaḍā indicates perfecting a matter, making it firm, and carrying it

1. Qur'an, 65:7.
2. *Mu'jam al-Maqāyīs fī al-Lugha*, 877.

out in its proper direction. God said: "So He completed them as seven heavens in two days." That is, He perfected their creation. He continued: The judge (*qāḍī*) is called such because he makes firm the rulings and implements them, and death is called *qaḍā'* because it is a matter that is carried out upon the children of Adam and other creatures.[3]

Al-Rāghib said: "*Qadar* and *taqdīr* mean determining the quantity of something, while *qaḍā'* is the decisive settling of a matter, whether in word or deed".[4] This is what the linguistic authorities have mentioned, and they were preceded in this by the Imams of the Household (a.s.), as reported in their narrations. Al-Kulaynī narrated through his chain to Yūnus ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, from Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā (a.s.), when Yūnus asked him about the meaning of *qadar* and *qaḍā'*, he said:

"It is the design and setting of limits regarding permanence and extinction, and *qaḍā'* is the making firm and establishing of the essence".[5] In summary: The limit and measure of something is called its *qadar*, and its being in such a way that its existence becomes determined and does not fail to occur is called its *qaḍā'*.

Legislative Decree and Predestination

These refer to the divine commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'an and Sunna. The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) referred to these in his words when the Syrian asked him about the meaning of *qaḍā'* and *qadar*, saying: "The command to obey and prohibition from disobedience, enabling one to do good and abandon evil, assistance in drawing near to Him and abandonment of those who disobey Him, and promise and threat," to the end of his noble words.[6]

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3. Previous source, 893.
4. *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*, under the entry "qadr and qaḍā"
5. *Al-Kāfī*, 1/158. Also narrated by al-Ṣadūq in his *Tawḥīd* with slight variation.
6. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, 380; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 5/128, Chapter on Divine Decree and Predestination, Hadith 74.

Epistemic Decree and Predestination

Epistemic determination means the specification of everything with its characteristics in His eternal knowledge, prior to its creation. He knows the limit of everything, its measure, and its physical and non-physical characteristics. Epistemic decree means His knowledge of the necessity of things' existence and their being made firm when all the causes and conditions upon which their existence depends are realized and obstacles are removed.

His prior knowledge of the limits of things and the necessity of their existence is epistemic determination and decree, and this category has been referred to in verses of the Glorious Book. The Exalted said:

"And no soul can die except by God's permission at a term appointed"[7]

He also said:

"Say: Nothing will afflict us except what God has decreed for us; He is our protector, and upon God let the believers rely".[8]

And He said: "And no aged person is granted a length of life, nor is anything diminished from his lifespan, but it is in a book. Indeed, that is easy for God".[9]

And He said:

"No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a book before We bring it into being. Indeed, that is easy for God".[10]

These are some of the verses that explain that the specific characteristics of things and the necessity of their existence are realized in His eternal knowledge, or levels of His knowledge, like the book mentioned in the previous verses.

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7. Qur'an, 3:145
8. Qur'an, 9:51
9. Qur'an, 35:11
10. Qur'an, 57:22

Concrete Decree and Predestination

Concrete determination (*taqdīr ʿaynī*) refers to the characteristics that a thing acquires from its causes when it comes into being and takes on external existence.

Concrete decree (*qaḍāʾ ʿaynī*) is the necessity of a thing's existence when its complete cause exists, as a concrete external necessity.

Concrete determination and decree relate to the external determination and necessity that encompass the external thing. They coincide with the existence of the thing and are indeed united with it, whereas epistemic determination and decree precede the existence of the thing.

The visible world that we observe is not devoid of determination and decree. Its determination is the specification of existing things in terms of their existence, the effects of their existence, and the characteristics of their being, as they are dependent in their existence and effects on other existents - meaning their causes and conditions. Thus their existence and states differ according to their causes and conditions. Determination guides this type of existent to what has been determined for it in the course of its existence. God said: "Who created and proportioned, and Who determined and guided".[11]

That is, He guided what He created to what He determined for it.

As for His decree, since events in their existence and realization ultimately lead back to Him as long as their causes and necessary conditions for their existence are not complete, they remain in a state of uncertainty between occurrence and non-occurrence. When their causes and general conditions are complete and all that remains is for them to exist, that becomes God's decree and decisive separation from the other possibility, eliminating ambiguity.

This shows that concrete determination and decree (*taqdīr wa qaḍāʾ ʿaynī*) are among His active attributes as they refer to the bestowal of limitation and necessity upon existents. This is what Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) indicates in his statement:

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11. Qur'an, 87:2-3

"Decree and determination are two creations from among God's creations, and God increases in creation whatever He wills".[12] From this, we understand the reason for the Prophet and the People of the House's (a.s.) emphasis on belief in determination, and that a believer cannot be a believer except through belief in it[13], for concrete determination and decree are branches of creation. You have learned in the discussions of monotheism that among the levels of monotheism is monotheism in creation, and you have just learned that the limitations of things, their specific characteristics, and the necessity of their existence ultimately lead back to His will. Thus, belief in both of these is among the aspects of monotheism in creation.

For this reason, you see that He has attributed decree and determination to Himself, saying:

"God has set a measure for all things".[14]

And the Exalted said: "When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is".[15]

And the Glorified said: "And He completed them as seven heavens within two days".[16]

And the Exalted said: "Indeed, all things We created with predestination".[17]

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12. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 60, Hadith 1
13. Al-Ṣadūq narrated in *Al-Khiṣāl* through his chain from Ali (a.s.) who said: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "A servant does not believe until he believes in four things: until he testifies that there is no god but Allah alone with no partner, and that I am the Messenger of Allah sent with the truth, and until he believes in resurrection after death, and until he believes in divine decree." (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, Chapter on Divine Decree and Predestination, Hadith 2). He also narrated through his chain from Abū Umāma the companion, who said: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "There are four whom Allah will not look at on the Day of Resurrection: one who is disobedient to parents, one who reminds others of his favors, one who denies divine decree, and one who is addicted to wine." (*Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, Chapter on Divine Decree and Predestination, Hadith 3). Al-Tirmidhī narrated from Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh who said: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said: "A servant does not believe until he believes in divine decree, its good and its evil." (*Jāmi' al-Uṣūl* by Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 606 AH), vol. 10, p. 511, Book of Destiny, Hadith 7552)
14. Qur'an, 65:3
15. Qur'an, 2:117
16. Qur'an, 41:12
17. Qur'an, 54:49

And the Glorified said: "And there is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except according to a known measure".[18]

And other verses that speak of His decree concerning things and their establishment on the page of existence.

18. Qur'an, 15:21

32

ON THE REALITY OF DIVINE REVISION (BADĀʾ)

The issue of divine revision (*badā'*) occupies an important position in the beliefs of Twelver Shi'i Muslims, who follow in this matter the texts transmitted from the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.) regarding this issue:

Al-Ṣadūq narrated through his chain from Zurāra from one of them, meaning Abū Jaʿfar and Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.), who said: "God, the Mighty and Majestic, has not been worshipped with anything like divine revision (*badā'*)."[1]

And he narrated through his chain from Hishām ibn Sālim, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) who said: "God, the Mighty and Majestic, has not been magnified with anything like divine revision (*badā'*)."[2]

And he narrated through his chain from Muḥammad ibn Muslim, from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) who said: "God, the Mighty and Majestic, did not send any prophet until He took from him three commitments: Acknowledgment of servitude, rejection of equals [to

1. *Al-Tawḥīd* by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 54, Hadith 1
2. Same source, Hadith 2

God], and that God brings forward what He wills and delays what He wills."[3]

And from al-Rayyān ibn al-Ṣalt, who said: I heard al-Riḍā (a.s.) saying: "God never sent a prophet except with the prohibition of wine and acknowledgment of divine revision (*badā'*)."[4]

And there are other such traditions from them (a.s.) in this regard.

Divine revision (*badā'*) in language means the appearance of something after its being hidden, and it implies ignorance of something and a change in will and opinion, both of which are impossible for the Exalted.

The Twelver Shi'is are in agreement, following the texts of the Qur'an, the Sunna, and rational proofs, that He knows all things and events - their past, present and future, their universals and particulars - and texts have been transmitted about this from the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.).

Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.) said: "God existed when nothing else existed, and God has always known what would come to be, so His knowledge of it before its existence is like His knowledge of it after bringing it into existence."[5]

And Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Every matter that God wills is in His knowledge before He creates it. Nothing appears to Him except that it was already in His knowledge. Indeed, nothing appears to God out of ignorance."[6]

And there are other mutually supporting texts regarding this.

The Reality of Divine Revision (*Badā'*) According to the Imami School

Thus it becomes clear that what is meant by divine revision (*badā'*) in Imami traditions - which is considered one of their religious beliefs - is not its linguistic meaning. For how could it be right to attribute to

3. Same source, Hadith 3
4. Same source, Hadith 6
5. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/86, Hadith 23
6. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/121, Hadith 63

any rational person - let alone to al-Bāqir, the Splitter of Knowledge, and al-Ṣādiq, the Truthful One of the Community (a.s.) - the claim that God is only worshipped and magnified through believing that realities appear to Him after being hidden from Him, and that knowledge comes after ignorance?! Never! All of this confirms that what these great figures meant by divine revision (*badā'*) is different from what the objectors understand. Rather, their intended meaning of divine revision (*badā'*) is nothing but that humans are capable of changing their destiny through good and bad deeds[7], and that God has both conditional, contingent decrees and absolute decrees. Humans are only able to influence the conditional decree, which is itself a divine decree, and God knows both types eternally, just as He knows the occurrence or non-occurrence of the condition, meaning the human actions that affect the change in their destiny.

Shaykh al-Mufīd said:

"Something may be written with a condition and its state may change. God said:

'Then He decreed a term and there is a specified term with Him.'[8]

This shows that terms are of two types, one of which is conditional and can be increased or decreased. Do you not see God's saying: 'No aged person is granted a length of life, nor is anything decreased from his life span, except that it is in a record.'[9]

And His saying: 'If the people of the towns had believed and been God-fearing, We would have opened upon them blessings from heaven and earth.'[10]

This shows that their terms were conditional, extending with righteousness and being cut short by corruption. And God said reporting what Noah (a.s.) said in addressing his people:

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7. You will see that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) - according to what al-Bukhārī narrated - used the term divine alteration (*badā'*) in the same meaning that the Imamiyya adopt.
8. Qur'an, 6:2
9. Qur'an, 35:11
10. Qur'an, 7:96

'Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send rain from the sky upon you in abundance.'[11]

Thus He made forgiveness a condition for extending their term and bestowing abundant blessings upon them. Had they not done so, He would have cut short their terms, terminated their deeds, and uprooted them with punishment. Therefore, divine revision (*badā'*) from God is specific to what was conditional in the decree, and it is not a shift from one determination to another. God is far above what the falsifiers say, in great transcendence.[12]

The Explanation of Divine Revision in Light of the Qur'an and Sunna

It has become clear from what preceded that what is meant by divine revision (*badā'*) is nothing but the change of destiny and what is decreed through good and bad deeds, and their effect on what God has decreed for them from the conditional decree. To clarify this meaning, we point to examples from the Qur'anic verses and what has been reported in traditions regarding the change of destiny through good and bad deeds.

1. The Glorified said: "Indeed, God does not change what is with a people until they change what is within themselves."[13]
2. And the Glorified said: "That is because God would not change a blessing which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what is within themselves."[14]
3. And the Glorified said: "And if only the people of the towns had believed and feared God, We would have opened upon them blessings from heaven and earth. But

11. Qur'an, 71:10-11
12. *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqād*, 50, and see also: *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, 52, Chapter on the Discussion of Divine Alteration and Will
13. Qur'an, 13:11
14. Qur'an, 8:53

they denied [the truth], so We seized them for what they used to earn."[15]

4. And the Glorified said: "And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.'"[16]
5. And the Glorified said: "Then has there not been any town that believed and its faith benefited it except the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in worldly life and gave them enjoyment for a time."[17]
6. And the Glorified said: "And had he not been of those who exalt God, he would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected."[18]
7. And the Glorified said: "And God presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of God. So God made it taste the garment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing."[19]

And there are many other such verses. From the traditions, the following indicate this:

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH/1506 CE) narrated from Ali (a.s.) that he asked the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) about this verse "God eliminates what He wills," and he said:

"I will surely grant you comfort with its explanation, and grant comfort to my community after me with its explanation: charity given properly, kindness to parents, and doing good deeds transform misery into happiness, increase a person's lifespan, and protect them from evil ends."[20]

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15. Qur'an, 7:96
16. Qur'an, 14:7
17. Qur'an, 10:98
18. Qur'an, 37:143-144
19. Qur'an, 16:112
20. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4/66

And al-Ḥākim reported from Ibn 'Abbās, who said: "Caution does not benefit against destiny, but God eliminates through supplication what He wills from destiny."[21]

And Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.) said: "Maintaining family ties purifies deeds, increases wealth, repels calamity, eases the reckoning, and delays the appointed term."[22]

And al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Indeed supplication repels decree, and indeed the believer commits a sin and is thereby deprived of provision."[23]

And there are many other mutually supporting traditions narrated from both groups in this regard.

The Controversy is Purely Terminological

From what has preceded, it becomes clear that the reality of *badā'* - which is the change in human destiny through good and bad deeds - is something that every Muslim must necessarily believe in. To this, Shaykh al-Ṣadūq pointed when he said:

"Whoever acknowledges that God, the Mighty and Majestic, has the power to do whatever He wills, eliminate whatever He wills, create in its place whatever He wills, bring forward whatever He wills, delay whatever He wills, and command whatever He wills however He wills, has acknowledged *badā'*. And God, the Mighty and Majestic, is not glorified by anything better than acknowledging that to Him belongs creation and command, bringing forward and delaying, establishing what did not exist and erasing what did exist."[24]

In reality, the dispute is only about terminology. Had the opponents understood that calling God's action *badā'* is metaphorical and expansive in meaning, they would not have drawn their sword of criticism against them. And if one refuses even the metaphorical usage, then they must follow the Greatest Prophet (s.a.w.) who used the term

21. Same source
22. *Al-Kāfī*, 2/470
23. *Al-Biḥār*, 93/288
24. *Al-Tawḥīd*, 335, Chapter 54

badā' for the Glorified in this metaphorical sense that we mentioned, in the hadith of the leper, the bald man, and the blind man. Abu Hurayra reported that he heard the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) say: "There were three men among the Children of Israel - a leper, a bald man, and a blind man. God, the Mighty and Majestic, wished (*badā*) to test them."[25] So however his (s.a.w.) words are explained, so should the words of his successors be explained.

The terminology is used as a form of verbal correspondence (*mushākala*), as the Glorified One expresses His own action in many contexts using the same terms that people use to describe their own actions, for the sake of apparent correspondence. Thus you see the Qur'an attributing to God "plotting" (*makr*), "scheming" (*kayd*), "deception" (*khidā'*), "forgetting" (*nisyān*), and "anger" (*asaf*) when it says:

"They are devising a scheme, and I too am devising a scheme."[26]

"And they plotted a plot, and We plotted a plot."[27]

"Indeed, the hypocrites seek to deceive God, but He is deceiving them."[28]

"They forgot God, so He forgot them."[29]

"So when they angered Us, We took retribution from them."[30]

And there are many other such verses and instances.

Through this, you can understand that what al-Ash'arī mentioned in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, and al-Balghami in his exegesis, and al-Rāzī in *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, and others regarding *badā'*, has no connection to the Shi'i belief about it. They explained *badā'* for God as the appearance of what was hidden from Him, and the Shi'is are innocent of this. Rather, *badā'* according to them, as you have learned, is the change in divine destiny that God has made conditional upon good and bad deeds. If there is any appearance after

25. *Al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa-l-Athar*, 1/109, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4/172
26. Qur'an, 86:15-16
27. Qur'an, 27:50
28. Qur'an, 4:142
29. Qur'an, 9:67
30. Qur'an, 43:55

hiddenness, it is in relation to us, not in relation to God. Rather, in relation to Him it is the revealing and manifesting of what was hidden, even if the term *badā'* is applied to it metaphorically.

Judaism and the Denial of Abrogation and *Badā'*

It is well-established in Jewish theology that what Muslim scholars refer to as abrogation (*naskh*), whether in legislation or creation, does not occur. As for legislative abrogation, they have argued against its possibility using various arguments mentioned in books of jurisprudence along with their rebuttals. As for abrogation in creation - which is humanity's ability to change its destiny through what it acquires of deeds by its will and choice - they argued against its possibility by saying that once the pen of destiny and decree has written things in pre-eternity, it is impossible for divine will to relate to its opposite. In other words, they held that God had finished with the matter of the system and the pen had dried regarding what was to be, so it is impossible for God to erase what He had established and change what He had written initially.

This meaning of abrogation that the Jews denied is exactly, as you see, the reality of *badā'* in the sense that the Imami Shi'is believe in it, as you have learned. Its denial is one of the Jewish beliefs that infiltrated Muslim societies in some periods and took on the garb of Islamic belief, even though the Qur'an refutes the Jews in this belief of theirs and says:

"God erases whatever He wills and establishes [whatever He wills], and with Him is the Mother of the Book."[31]

And He also says: "Every day He is engaged in some work."[32]

God has related the Jewish belief in His words: "The Jews say, 'God's hand is tied.'"[33]

This statement from them expresses their belief about God, that

31. Qur'an, 13:39
32. Qur'an, 55:29
33. Qur'an, 5:64

He is deprived of will regarding everything He has written and decreed, and consequently His inability to give more than what He has determined and decreed. So God refuted them by invalidating that belief, saying:

"Rather, His hands are extended; He gives however He wills."[34]

For this reason, Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) explained the verse by saying: "But they (the Jews) said: 'He has finished with the matter, so He neither increases nor decreases.' So God, exalted be His glory, said in refutation of their statement: 'Their hands are tied, and they are cursed for what they say. Rather, His hands are extended; He gives however He wills.' Have you not heard God, mighty and majestic, say:

'God erases whatever He wills and establishes [whatever He wills], and with Him is the Mother of the Book.'"[35]

From this, you can understand that belief in *badā'* is at the core of religion and one of the requirements of monotheism and belief in the universality of His power, glory be to Him. It is one of His decrees and established practices governing human life without depriving humans of choice in changing their destiny. Just as He is engaged in some work every day, and His will governs destiny, likewise the servant has choice and can change their destiny and what is decreed for them through good deeds, removing themselves from among the wretched and entering among the fortunate, just as they can do the opposite. For God, glory be to Him:

"God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."[36]

Thus only changes the destiny of a servant through a change from them through their good or bad deeds. The change in divine destiny through good or bad deeds is not considered contrary to His initial decree, glory be to Him. Rather, it is also part of His decree and established practices.

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34. Qur'an, 5:64
35. *Al-Tawḥīd*, Chapter 25, Hadith 1
36. Qur'an, 13:11

The Definitive and Conditional Decrees

We previously indicated that change occurs in the conditional decree (*al-taqdīr al-mawqūf*) rather than the definitive decree (*al-taqdīr al-maḥtūm*), and this requires some explanation. We say: God has two types of decrees: definitive and conditional. The definitive decree is that which is never altered or changed absolutely, such as His decree regarding the sun and moon traveling until an appointed time, and the solar system having a defined lifespan, and His decree concerning every human that they must die, and other fixed laws governing the universe and humankind.

The conditional decree refers to matters that are decreed conditionally, so He decrees that a sick person will die at such and such time unless they seek treatment, or undergo surgery, or are prayed for and charity is given on their behalf, and other such decrees that change through material and other causes, which are also among His decrees, glory be to Him. God knows both types of decrees eternally: the definitive, the conditional, and what the conditional depends upon. Here are some narrations from the Imams of the Household (a.s.) regarding these two types of decrees:

Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir (a.s.) was asked about the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), and he said: "The angels and scribes descend to the lowest heaven and write what will occur in matters of the year... [then he said:] and there is a conditional matter in which God has will - He brings forward what He wills of it and delays what He wills, and this is His saying:

'God erases what He wills and establishes [what He wills], and with Him is the Mother of the Book.'"[37]

Al-Fuḍayl reported: I heard Abū Ja'far (a.s.) say: "Among matters are definitive matters that will inevitably come to pass, and among matters are conditional matters with God - He brings forward what

37. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/102, Chapter on *Badā'*, Hadith 14, quoted from *Amālī al-Ṭūsī*

He wills of them, erases what He wills of them, and establishes what He wills of them."[38]

In a hadith, al-Riḍā (a.s.) said to Sulaymān al-Marwazī: "O Sulaymān, among matters are conditional matters with God, blessed and exalted be He - He brings forward what He wills of them and delays what He wills."[39]

Then the Qur'an mentions the term in two ways: absolutely and with the description of being "named", saying:

"He is the One Who created you from clay, then decreed a term - and there is a named term with Him - yet still you doubt."[40]

Thus He established for humans two terms: an absolute one and a named one.

The meaning of the named term is the definitive decree (*al-taqdīr al-maḥtūm*), and the absolute term is the conditional decree (*al-taqdīr al-mawqūf*). 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī said:

"There are two terms: the absolute term, and the named term with God. This latter is that in which no change occurs due to its being qualified by His words 'with Him,' and He has said: 'What is with God endures.'"[41]

This is the definitive term that does not change or alter. God said: "When their term comes, they cannot delay it by a single hour, nor can they advance it."[42]

The relationship of the named term to the unnamed term is like the relationship of the absolute and immediate to the conditional and suspended. It is possible for the conditional and suspended to fail to materialize due to the non-fulfillment of its condition upon which it depends, unlike the absolute and immediate, which must inevitably materialize.

Reflection on the verses indicates that the named term is that which is placed in the Mother of the Book, while the unnamed term

38. Previous source, 119, Hadith 58
39. Same source, 95, Hadith 2
40. Qur'an, 6:2
41. Qur'an, 16:96
42. Qur'an, 10:49

The Definitive and Conditional Decrees

We previously indicated that change occurs in the conditional decree (*al-taqdīr al-mawqūf*) rather than the definitive decree (*al-taqdīr al-maḥtūm*), and this requires some explanation. We say: God has two types of decrees: definitive and conditional. The definitive decree is that which is never altered or changed absolutely, such as His decree regarding the sun and moon traveling until an appointed time, and the solar system having a defined lifespan, and His decree concerning every human that they must die, and other fixed laws governing the universe and humankind.

The conditional decree refers to matters that are decreed conditionally, so He decrees that a sick person will die at such and such time unless they seek treatment, or undergo surgery, or are prayed for and charity is given on their behalf, and other such decrees that change through material and other causes, which are also among His decrees, glory be to Him. God knows both types of decrees eternally: the definitive, the conditional, and what the conditional depends upon. Here are some narrations from the Imams of the Household (a.s.) regarding these two types of decrees:

Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir (a.s.) was asked about the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), and he said: "The angels and scribes descend to the lowest heaven and write what will occur in matters of the year... [then he said:] and there is a conditional matter in which God has will - He brings forward what He wills of it and delays what He wills, and this is His saying:

'God erases what He wills and establishes [what He wills], and with Him is the Mother of the Book.'"[37]

Al-Fuḍayl reported: I heard Abū Ja'far (a.s.) say: "Among matters are definitive matters that will inevitably come to pass, and among matters are conditional matters with God - He brings forward what

37. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 4/102, Chapter on *Badā'*, Hadith 14, quoted from *Amālī al-Ṭūsī*

He wills of them, erases what He wills of them, and establishes what He wills of them."[38]

In a hadith, al-Riḍā (a.s.) said to Sulaymān al-Marwazī: "O Sulaymān, among matters are conditional matters with God, blessed and exalted be He - He brings forward what He wills of them and delays what He wills."[39]

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38. Previous source, 119, Hadith 58
39. Same source, 95, Hadith 2
40. Qur'an, 6:2
41. Qur'an, 16:96
42. Qur'an, 10:49

is that which is written in what we call the Tablet of Erasure and Affirmation (*lawḥ al-maḥw wa-l-ithbāt*).[43]

43. *Al-Mīzān*, 7/8-9

PART V

ON PROPHETHOOD IN GENERAL

33

INTRODUCING PROPHETHOOD

Prophethood (*nubuwwa*) is an ambassadorship between God and His rational servants (*ʿibād*), to manage their lives in matters of their worldly affairs and afterlife. The prophet is the person who conveys information from God through divine revelation.

The study of prophethood takes two forms:

First: The study of prophethood in general, called general prophethood (*al-nubuwwa al-ʿāmma*);

Second: The study of the prophethood of a specific prophet, such as the prophethood of our master Muḥammad (s.a.w.), called specific prophethood (*al-nubuwwa al-khāṣṣa*).

The discussions that theologians have presented regarding general prophethood revolve around four matters:

1. The propriety and necessity of divine mission, or analysis of the proofs of those who affirm and those who deny divine mission;
2. The way by which the true prophet is distinguished from the false claimant;

3. The way or means by which the prophet receives his teachings from God, glory be to Him;
4. The distinctive qualities of the prophet compared to others.

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ARGUMENTS FOR THE NECESSITY OF PROPHETS

Society's Need for A Complete Legal Code

None of the philosophers or students of human life doubt that humans have an inclination toward society and civilization, just as society's need for law is beyond doubt. This is because humans are inherently disposed to self-love (*ḥubb al-dhāt*), which leads them to claim everything for themselves without considering the rights of others. This leads to competition and conflict between members of society, and consequently to the futility of life and the dissolution of society's foundations. Thus, social life cannot be established except through the implementation of a comprehensive law that defines the duties and rights of each individual, so that every person can live under social justice and follow the path of success and prosperity.

Conditions for the Lawmaker

There is no doubt that establishing a comprehensive law with the aforementioned description requires certain conditions, the most important of which are the following two:

First: The lawmaker's knowledge of human beings; The first and most important step in establishing law is that the lawmaker must have knowledge of humans: their body and soul, their instincts and innate dispositions (*fiṭriyyāt*), and what benefits or harms these aspects. The more complete this knowledge of humans is, the more successful and effective the law will be in treating their problems and helping them achieve the intended happiness of their creation.

Second: The lawmaker's lack of benefit from the law; This condition is self-evident, for if the lawmaker benefits from the law they establish, whether the benefit returns to them or to those with whom they have special connections, then this law will serve the interests of the lawmaker rather than society, and its inevitable result will be injustice and unfairness.

Thus, perfect law can only be achieved if its creator is free from self-love (*ḥubb al-dhāt*) and the desire for personal benefit.

As for the first condition: We will not find in existence any being who knows humans better than their Creator, for the maker of something knows it better than others. God says:

"Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the All-Aware?"[1]

The greatness of humans in their spirit, their abstract qualities, their instincts, and their innate dispositions is like a vast ocean whose shore cannot be seen and whose expanse cannot be illuminated. Many aspects of human life and the symbols of their existence remain hidden, to the extent that humans have been called "the unknown being."

As for the second condition: We will likewise not find any being free from any poverty, need, or benefit except God.

Among the evidence for humanity's unsuitability to establish perfect law is what we see of the constant change in laws and the continuous criticism directed at them, such that they need daily exceptions for some legislation and additions for others. This is in addition to the contradiction between laws proposed around the

1. Qur'an, 67:14

world by humans, which is only due to their inability to truly know human beings and the absence of other conditions in their makers.

If the stability of human social life depends on divine legislation, then it is necessary in His wisdom to convey these laws to them through one of their own whom He sends to them. The bearer of God's message is the Prophet who informs about Him and the Messenger who conveys to people. Thus, sending prophets is necessary in His wisdom to preserve the order that depends on perfect legislation. This proof is indicated in His words:

"We have sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may establish justice."[2]

The Human Need for Higher Knowledge

The two most important things that humans need to understand in order to successfully achieve the desired happiness in their lives are: knowledge of God and understanding what benefits and harms life. Complete knowledge in these two areas can only be attained through divine revelation and the teachings of the prophets, as human sciences alone are insufficient in both domains.

What demonstrates the inadequacy of human knowledge in divine sciences is that there are millions of people living in Southeast Asian countries who have achieved an advanced level in industry and natural sciences, yet they remain at the lowest level in divine knowledge. Most of them, if not all, are worshippers of idols and false deities. Consider also vast India and what hundreds of millions of its people believe regarding the sanctity of the "cow."

Yes, there have been brilliant individuals among humanity who recognized the truth through contemplation and reasoning, like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, but these were exceptional people who cannot be considered the standard in this inquiry. Their knowledge of monotheism does not prove others' ability to achieve the same.

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2. Qur'an, 57:25

Moreover, it is highly probable that their attainment of this knowledge came through what reached them of heavenly teachings via His messengers and prophets. Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said:

"The pillars of respected wisdom among the Greeks were five: Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, may his soul be sanctified. Pythagoras met the disciples of Solomon son of David (a.s.) in Egypt and learned from them. He was also a student of the great divine sage Empedocles, who learned from Luqmān, who in turn learned from David (a.s.). Then Socrates learned from Pythagoras, Plato from Socrates, and Aristotle learned from Plato and accompanied him for over twenty years..."[3]

What also indicates the inadequacy of human knowledge in identifying what benefits and harms humans and societies is that human society - despite its scientific arrogance - has not yet determined the beneficial economic system. One group claims that human happiness lies in capitalism and absolute free economy, while another asserts that human happiness is found in the socialist system and the removal of ownership of means of production from individuals, transferring it to the ruling state.

Similarly, humanity has not yet reached consensus in the field of ethics, with ethical approaches in recent times becoming so numerous that they contradict each other.

We also see that humans - despite their claims to knowledge and understanding - have not yet grasped the factors of happiness and misery that affect them. This is evidenced by their consumption of intoxicants, use of drugs, and eating of harmful meats, as well as basing their economy on usury (*ribā*), which is a factor in creating class disparity between members of society.

In what has been narrated from the Imams of the Household (a.s.), there are references to this proof, of which we present two examples. Imam al-Kāẓim (a.s.) said:

"O Hishām! God only sent His prophets and messengers to His servants so that they might understand from God. Thus, those who

3. *Al-Rasā'il*, 68-69

respond best are those who know Him best, and those who know God's command best are those with the best intellect, and those with the most complete intellect are of the highest rank in this world and the next."[4]

And Imam al-Riḍā (a.s.) said: "It was necessary to have a messenger between Him and them who is infallible, who would convey to them His commands and prohibitions and His etiquette, and who would inform them of what would secure their benefits and ward off their harms, since their nature did not contain what would allow them to recognize what they need."[5]

4. *Al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, Book of Intellect and Ignorance, Hadith 12
5. *Biḥār al-Anwār*, 11/40

35

ARGUMENTS OF THOSE WHO DENY THE MISSION OF PROPHETS

Those who deny the mission of prophets have supported their claim with several arguments, the most important of which are:

First Argument

The messenger either brings what agrees with reason or what contradicts it. If he brings what agrees with reason, there is no need for him and no benefit in it. And if he brings what contradicts reason, his word must be rejected.

The response to this is: What the messenger brings agrees with reason in reality, but this does not necessitate that reason is aware of everything the prophet brings.

There is a third possibility here, which is that the messenger brings what reason cannot reach through its available capacities. You have already learned from the proofs we established regarding the necessity of prophethood that human reason and thought fall short of attaining many matters.

Second Argument:

Rational proofs have demonstrated that the universe has a wise, capable, and knowing Creator who has bestowed blessings upon His servants that necessitate gratitude. We observe the signs of His creation with our intellects and thank Him for His blessings upon us. When we know Him and thank Him, we deserve His reward, and when we deny and disbelieve in Him, we deserve His punishment. So why should we follow a human like ourselves?!

The response to this is: Many people do not know how to properly express gratitude. Some might imagine that worshipping those close to God is a form of gratitude to God. This is why you find idol worshippers believing that their worship of created beings brings them closer to God.[1] Moreover, limiting the prophets' programs to commanding gratitude and forbidding ingratitude overlooks their lofty goals. They came to bring happiness to humanity in both individual and social life. Their message is not limited to dry litanies and remembrances like those repeated by followers of some religions on Saturdays and Sundays in synagogues and churches. You can understand the greatness of the Noble Prophet's (s.a.w.) message's objectives when you consider his famous saying: "I have brought you the good of this world and the next."[2]

Third Argument:

The greatest of major sins in prophethood is following a man who is like you in form, soul, and intellect, who eats what you eat and drinks what you drink...

What distinction does he have over you? What virtue necessitates

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1. God says, relating from the polytheists: "And those who take protectors besides Him [say], 'We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position'" (Qur'an, 39:3)
2. *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 2/63, said by the Prophet when calling his relatives to Islam

your subservience to him? And what is his proof of truthfulness in his claim?[3]

The response to this is: This is a doubt that the Qur'an itself addresses along with its response. The doubt is referenced in God's words:

"...And those who did wrong confided to each other, 'Is this not just a human being like yourselves? Will you submit to magic while you can see?'"[4]

And in His words:

"The chiefs of his people who disbelieved and denied the meeting of the Hereafter and whom We had given luxury in the worldly life said, 'This is not but a human being like yourselves. He eats of what you eat and drinks of what you drink. And if you should obey a human being like yourselves, indeed, you would then be losers.'"[5]

The response to this is given in His words:

"Their messengers said to them, 'We are only human beings like you, but God confers favor upon whom He wills of His servants. It has never been for us to bring you evidence except by permission of God. And upon God let the believers rely.'"[6]

And in His words: "Say, 'I am only a human being like you, to whom revelation comes.'"[7]

The first phrase, which establishes unity in humanity, points to one of the two pillars of prophethood, which is the necessity of complete similarity between the messenger (with a fatḥa) (*mursal*) and those to whom he is sent (*mursal ilayh*). And His words "to whom revelation comes" points to the distinction between them, and that it is due to the descent of revelation upon him that following and obeying him becomes obligatory. Through this, the excellence, virtue, and precedence of the prophets over others becomes apparent.

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3. For understanding the evidence of the Brahmins, see: *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* by al-Shahristānī, 2/250-252; *Kashf al-Murād*, 217; *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Fāḍil al-Qūshjī, 358
4. Qur'an, 21:3
5. Qur'an, 23:33-34
6. Qur'an, 14:11
7. Qur'an, 41:6

As for their proof of the truthfulness of their claims, you will learn in the following discussion that miracles (*mu'jiza*) are a demonstrative way to distinguish between a truthful prophet and a false claimant to prophethood.

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MIRACLES AND PROVING THE TRUTH OF PROPHETIC CLAIMS

The claim of prophethood must be accompanied by evidence that proves its validity, otherwise it would be an empty claim unworthy of acceptance and submission. This is what human nature requires. The Muslim philosopher Ibn Sina once famously stated: "Whoever accepts the claim of a claimant without clear proof and evidence has departed from human nature."

There are three ways to verify the truthfulness of one who claims prophethood:

a. A miracle (*mu'jiza*);
b. The confirmation of a subsequent prophet's prophethood by a preceding prophet;
c. Gathering evidence and testimonies from the claimant's circumstances and the students of his method.

Here we will suffice with explaining the way of miracles, which is the most important of these.

Definition of a Miracle

The well-known definition of a miracle (*mu'jiza*) is: "An extraordinary event that defies natural laws, accompanied by a challenge, without being matched."[1] Here is its explanation: There are matters that are considered contrary to reason, such as the simultaneous existence and non-existence of contradictories, the existence of an effect without a cause, and similar things. There are other matters that contradict ordinary rules, meaning they are considered impossible according to ordinary tools, devices, and natural processes, but they are not rationally impossible if there were other extraordinary means available - these are called miracles. An example would be moving a large body from one place to a distant location in the blink of an eye without ordinary means. This is not rationally impossible, but it is naturally impossible. Of this type is what the Qur'an relates about one who had knowledge of the Book bringing the throne of Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba, from Yemen to Syria in the blink of an eye without using any of the familiar material means.[2] Thus, we conclude that a miracle is something that defies natural laws but does not contradict reason.

Furthermore, the performance of something extraordinary is not called a miracle unless it is accompanied by a claim to prophethood. When it occurs without such a claim and is performed by one of God's saints, it is called a "marvel" (*karāma*), like the provision that came to Mary (a.s.) without natural effort.[3] For this reason, it would be more appropriate to add to the definition the condition: "accompanied by a claim to prophethood."[4] A miracle is only established

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1. *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Fāḍil al-Qūshjī, 465
2. See: Qur'an, 27:40
3. See: Qur'an, 3:37
4. Miracles are not exclusive to claims of prophethood, but extend to claims of Imamate and other divine claims, such as a Muslim's claim that Islamic law is the truth over other laws, and engaging in *mubāhala* (mutual imprecation), for that is certainly a miracle. Therefore, the correct definition of a miracle is: "It is an act that breaks natural law, performed by one who claims a divine position or station as evidence of the truthfulness of their claim." See: *Al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, 33

when people are unable to match what the claimant to prophethood has produced. Consequently, the remarkable feats performed by great physicians and inventors fall outside the scope of miracles, just as the astonishing acts performed by magicians and ascetics are not considered miraculous due to the absence of this condition.

Among the conditions for a miracle to serve as evidence of the truthfulness of a prophetic claim is that the claimant's action must correspond to their claim. If it contradicts what they claimed, it would not be called a miracle even if it were an extraordinary event. An example of this is what happened with Musaylima the Liar when he claimed prophethood, saying that the sign of his prophethood was that when he spat into a well with little water, its water would increase - but when he spat, all of its water disappeared.

The Evidential Nature of Miracles and the Principle of Rational Good and Evil

The evidential nature of miracles in proving the truthfulness of prophetic claims depends on accepting the principle of rational good and evil (*al-ḥusn wa-l-qubḥ al-ʿaqliyyayn*). This is because a miracle can only serve as evidence of prophethood if reason determines that it would be wrong for a miracle to appear at the hands of a liar. If reason were to hesitate in perceiving this wrongness and consider it possible for a miracle to appear through a liar, it would be unable to distinguish between the truthful and the false. Therefore, those who deny reason's ability to judge good and evil must necessarily close the door to verifying prophethood through miracles. As ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī states:

"If good and evil were determined solely by religious law and nothing else, then nothing would be considered wrong for God to do. If this were the case, it would not be wrong for Him to manifest miracles through liars, and allowing for this possibility would close the door to recognizing prophethood. For if any prophet were to display a miracle after claiming prophethood, it would be impossible to verify

their truthfulness if we accept the possibility of miracles appearing through someone lying about their prophetic claim."[5]

The Miracle as Demonstrative Evidence

Some imagine that a miracle's indication of a prophet's truthfulness is merely persuasive rather than demonstrative, arguing that demonstrative evidence requires a logical connection between the claim and its proof, which they say is absent in this case. This can be refuted by noting that the claim of prophethood and messengership from every prophet and messenger—as narrated in the Qur'an—was based on claiming divine revelation and divine speech, either directly or through an angel's mediation. This is something that neither sensory perception nor experience can verify, as divine revelation, divine speech, and the subsequent religious legislation and education are not things that humans observe in themselves, and the normal course of causes and effects denies it. Thus, it is supernatural (*khāriq lil-ʿāda*).

If a prophet were truthful in claiming prophethood and revelation, it would necessarily follow that they are connected to the supernatural realm and supported by a divine power capable of supernatural acts. If this were true, it would be possible for the prophet to produce another supernatural act that would verify prophethood and revelation, with nothing preventing it, since similar cases share the same ruling. For if God intended to guide people through supernatural means—namely through prophethood and revelation—He would support and verify it with another supernatural act, which is the miracle.

This is what prompted nations to demand miracles as proof of prophetic claims whenever a messenger came to them from among themselves.[6]

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5. *Nahj al-Ḥaqq wa Kashf al-Ṣidq*, 84
6. *Al-Mīzān*, 1/86

Distinguishing Features of Miracles from Other Supernatural Events

There are several aspects that distinguish miracles and divine gifts (*karāma*) from other supernatural occurrences:

The first aspect concerns how they are obtained. Miracles and divine gifts are born of special divine providence, and their causes are not attainable through study and learning. However, sorcery and similar practices are the product of teaching and learning, with educational methods that must be practiced until the practitioner achieves the desired results. God says:

"They followed what the devils recited in Solomon's reign. Solomon did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. These two would not teach anyone without first saying, 'We are only a trial, so do not disbelieve.' Yet people learned from them the means to cause separation between a man and his wife."[7]

Since sorcery and similar practices depend on teaching and learning, they are similar in type and unified in nature, revolving in a single orbit and not exceeding the scope of what its practitioners have learned. Thus, they only produce what they have trained in. This contrasts with prophetic miracles, which display great diversity in their nature to the extent that one might not find common features or close similarities between miracles, as in the miracles the Qur'an relates about Moses and Jesus (a.s.). God says:

"So he cast down his staff, and behold, it was clearly a serpent."[8]

And He says: "And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white for the observers."[9]

And He says: "And when Moses sought water for his people, We

7. Qur'an, 2:102
8. Qur'an, 7:107
9. Qur'an, 7:108

said, 'Strike the rock with your staff.' Then twelve springs gushed forth from it."[10]

And He says: "Then We inspired Moses: 'Strike the sea with your staff.' And it parted, and each part was like a great mountain."[11]

And the Almighty says:

"And [as] a messenger to the Children of Israel [saying], 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I create for you from clay the form of a bird, then I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's permission. And I cure the blind and the leper, and I give life to the dead by God's permission. And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.'"[12]

Indeed, divine wisdom has required that the miracles of prophets be appropriate to the prevalent arts of their times, so that experts in each field could recognize these miracles, perceive their reliance on supernatural power, and distinguish them from remarkable works based on prevalent sciences and arts.

The second aspect concerns aims and purposes. Those who perform miracles adopt lofty goals and use their miracles to prove and spread the truth of these goals. These include calling to God alone, freeing humanity from the worship of idols, stones, and animals, calling to virtues and rejecting vices, establishing a system of social justice, and other such aims. Similarly, those granted divine gifts (*karāmāt*) only pursue what is in accordance with God's pleasure, nothing else.

This contrasts with ascetics and sorcerers, whose aims are either to gain fame and reputation among people, or to amass wealth and fortune, and other such aims that correspond to base desires.

The third aspect concerns adherence to moral values. Those who perform miracles and receive divine gifts - being graduates of the divine school - are adorned with the most perfect human virtues and

10. Qur'an, 2:60
11. Qur'an, 26:63
12. Qur'an, 3:49

morals. Anyone examining their lives will find no disgraceful act that contradicts chastity and noble character. As for practitioners of asceticism and sorcery, they fall short in this regard, and are generally devoid of ideals, virtues, and values.

Through these criteria, one can distinguish miracles from other supernatural events, and prophets from ascetics and sorcerers.

Miracles and the Law of Causality

Miracles are not considered a violation of the general law of causality. What is negated in the case of miracles are the conventional material causes that the natural world relies upon and that humans are accustomed to observing in their lives. However, it is not impossible for a miracle to have another cause that people have not previously observed, that science has not known, and that experience has not encountered.

Similarly, miracles do not undermine the argument from design that proves the existence of the Creator, because a miracle is not a violation of all the systems governing the universe. Rather, it is a breach in one part of its infinite parts that are subject to order and that indicate, through the argument from design, the existence of the Creator.

37

THE NATURE OF DIVINE REVELATION IN PROPHETHOOD

Revelation (*waḥy*) in language, as derived from the texts of linguists in their lexicons, is the communication of information secretly through some means.[1] It has been used in the Qur'an in various different contexts that share this linguistic meaning, either literally or figuratively. Among these is the Almighty's saying:

"And He revealed in each heaven its command."[2]

That is, He placed in each heaven the cosmic laws and systems, and ordained their continuance. The establishment of laws and systems in the heavens in a way that only those who contemplate creation can perceive resembles the secret conveyance and communication of information that only the recipient can perceive, which is revelation.

Among these is the Almighty's saying: "And your Lord revealed to the bees, 'Take for yourself dwellings among the mountains and among the trees and in what they construct.'"[3]

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1. See regarding this: *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lugha*, 6/93; *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*, entry "waḥy"; *Lisān al-'Arab*, 15/379
2. Qur'an, 41:12
3. Qur'an, 16:68

Here, revelation refers to what was placed in the very essence of bees' existence as a divine instinct guiding them to their specific vital activities.

Among these is the Almighty's saying: "And We revealed to Moses's mother, 'Nurse him.'"[4]

Where informing Moses's mother about her child's fate was through inspiration and secret communication, expressed as revelation.

Among these is the Almighty's saying in describing Zechariah:

"So he came out to his people from the prayer chamber and signaled to them to exalt [God] in the morning and afternoon."[5]

The meaning is that he gestured to them without speaking, because God had commanded him not to speak to people for three consecutive nights. His action resembled the secret conveyance of speech since gesturing is an ambiguous matter.

Among these is the Almighty's saying: "And indeed, the devils reveal to their allies [suggestive speech] to argue with you."[6]

The reason for using revelation (*waḥy*) here can be understood from what we mentioned previously.

Prophetic Revelation

The predominant usage of the word revelation (*waḥy*) in the Qur'an refers to God's speech revealed to one of His prophets. Whenever revelation is mentioned without qualification, this is what is meant. This is the reality we aim to explain, and so we say: The revelation specific to prophets is a unique perception distinct from all other forms of perception. It is neither a product of the senses, nor of reason, nor of instinct. Rather, it is a special awareness that God creates in the prophets, through which the prophet neither errs in his perception, nor becomes confused, nor experiences doubt, nor

4. Qur'an, 28:7
5. Qur'an, 19:11
6. Qur'an, 6:121

encounters uncertainty that it is God who is revealing to him, without needing to employ reasoning, seek evidence, or establish proof. God says: "The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down upon your heart."[7]

This verse indicates that it is the prophet's noble soul that receives revelation from the Trustworthy Spirit, without the involvement of the external senses that are the tools used in perceiving particular matters.

Therefore, revelation is the outcome of connection with the unseen realm, and it cannot be analyzed using conventional tools of knowledge nor through the principles that modern science is equipped with.

Those who do not acknowledge the unseen realm find it difficult to accept this form of perception that has no connection to the material world and its principles.

The Genius Hypothesis

Some modernists have explained prophethood (*nubuwwa*) as genius and revelation as flashes of that genius. The essence of their doctrine is that among civilized humans, certain individuals emerge who possess sound natural disposition and brilliant minds that guide them to what benefits society and human happiness. They establish laws that serve the interests of society and worldly prosperity. The righteous person who is distinguished by this type of genius is the prophet, and the beneficial thoughts that emanate from the depths of his mind and flashes of his genius constitute revelation (*waḥy*). The laws he establishes for social welfare constitute religion (*dīn*), the Trustworthy Spirit is his pure soul that emanates these thoughts to his centers of perception, and the heavenly book is his book containing his practices and laws.

This can be critiqued firstly by noting that if this theory were correct, nothing would remain of belief in the unseen except belief in the existence of the Creator, while everything else would be a product

7. Qur'an, 26:193-194

of fallible human thought. This is, in reality, a form of denial of religion.

Secondly, part of what occurs in revelation is the foretelling of future events with unfailing accuracy, whereas geniuses, despite their superior intelligence and insight, only speak of future events with caution and hesitation, not with certainty and conviction. Even if they were to make such predictions, these would not be immune from error and falsehood.

Thirdly, the bearers of revelation and claimants to prophethood - from first to last - attribute their teachings and practices to God and claim nothing for themselves. No one doubts that the prophets are righteous and truthful servants who do not lie. If the practices they brought were from their own thoughts, why would they deceive society by attributing them to God Almighty?

Is Revelation a Result of Spiritual States Manifesting?

Some orientalists[8] have claimed that revelation (*waḥy*) is inspiration that emanates from within the prophet's soul rather than from outside. They argue that his lofty spiritual inclinations, pure inner nature, and the strength of his faith in God and the necessity of His worship - along with abandoning idolatry and harmful inherited traditions - have such an influence that it manifests in his mind and produces visions and spiritual states in his subconscious. He then imagines what he believes to be necessary as divine guidance descending upon him from heaven without intermediary, or a man appears to him conveying this guidance, whom he believes to be an angel from the unseen realm. He may hear this being speaking, but he only sees and hears what he already believes while awake, just as one sees and hears similar things in dreams, which is one of the manifestations of revelation according to all prophets.

The proponents of this theory say: We do not doubt the truthful-

8. This theory is attributed to the orientalist Montet and was detailed by Émile Dermenghem. See: *Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadī*, Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, p. 66

ness of the prophets in reporting what they saw and heard, but we say that the source of this is from within themselves and contains nothing that came from the unseen realm that is said to exist beyond the material and natural world.

Critique of This Theory

Although this theory proposed by some Westerners may appeal to naive people and gain some superficial attraction, researchers fully understand that it is nothing new worth mentioning. Rather, it merely repeats the claims of pre-Islamic Arabs about prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and revelation. Among their fabrications against the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) was describing his law as the product of sweet dreams that would occur to his mind and then manifest through his tongue and vision. God Almighty says: "But they say: 'These are confused dreams'".[9]

The Qur'an refutes their claim and emphasizes that revelation is a real matter emanating from God saying:

"By the star when it descends, your companion has not strayed, nor has he erred, nor does he speak from desire. It is not except revelation revealed, taught to him by one intense in strength".[10]

It also says: "The heart did not lie about what it saw".[11]

Meaning that Muhammad's (s.a.w.) heart did not deny what his eyes perceived - that is, his vision was true, not false, and his perception was real.

And likewise He says: "The eye did not swerve, nor did it transgress"[12]

This is a metaphor for the accuracy of his vision, meaning that he did not see what he saw in any way other than its true nature, nor did he see anything that had no reality.

In summary: The prophets identified themselves as being sent by

9. Qur'an, 21:5
10. Qur'an, 53:1-5
11. Qur'an, 53:11
12. Qur'an, 53:17

God Almighty, and they had no role except to convey divine messages to people.

There is no doubt that they were truthful in their statements - as acknowledged by the proponent of this theory. Therefore, if we were to say that what they mentioned does not correspond to reality and that the knowledge and laws they brought were not divine messages and remembrance from the Glorious One, but rather emanated from within their consciousness and manifestations of their souls, then the prophets would have been deficient in the realm of knowledge, remaining in compound ignorance (*jahl murakkab*). This is something that no one with even minimal knowledge of the prophets' teachings and their illustrious personalities in the domains of knowledge and practice would utter. Indeed, both reason and innate nature reject the notion that even those below their rank among religious and scholarly figures could be characterized by such ignorance and confusion.

Divine Revelation and the Inner Personality

A group of Westerners have explained divine revelation in terms of what they established in their psychological research regarding the inner personality (*shakhṣiyya bāṭina*) present in every human being. They experimented with this on subjects under hypnotic trance and found that the sleeping person manifests a spiritual life that they do not possess while awake, whereby they know the unseen, report about distant people, see, hear, and sense without their external senses, and demonstrate a high degree of rationality and perception.

They said: This personality is what guides humans with good thoughts through their dense physical veils, and it is what gives them sudden beneficial inspirations in critical circumstances, and it is what instills in the hearts of prophets what they consider to be divine revelation, and it may appear to them in embodied form which they consider to be angels of God descending upon them from heaven.[13]

This can be critiqued firstly by noting that this theory, even if

13. See: *Dā 'irat al-Ma 'ārif* by Farīd Wajdī, 10/712-716

assumed to be correct, provides no evidence that the specific revelation received by prophets is of the same nature as the emanation and manifestation of the inner personality when external faculties are suspended.

Secondly, the inner personality of humans only manifests and finds scope to appear with its various effects when external faculties are suspended, which is why it becomes stronger in the sick, intoxicated, and sleeping, while remaining buried and submerged in the folds of the soul when external faculties and human senses are in an active and functioning state. Yet it is known that divine revelation would descend upon the prophets when they were in their most alert states and engaged in political, defensive, and missionary affairs. So how could what was revealed to the Prophet while he was in the thick of battle be a manifestation of the inner personality and hidden conscience? And how far were the prophets from seclusion and isolation from society?

38

THE INFALLIBILITY OF GOD'S PROPHETS

Infallibility has various ranks or dimensions, which are:

1. Infallibility in receiving and conveying revelation
2. Infallibility in implementing divine law
3. Infallibility from error in applying divine law
4. Infallibility from error in discerning the benefits and harms of matters
5. Infallibility from error in ordinary matters
6. Freedom from any dislikable qualities

The discussion of these and other related issues is the purpose of this chapter.

The Etymology of Infallibility (*'iṣma*)

Infallibility (*'iṣma*) linguistically means restraint and prevention.[1] In

1. *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lugha*, 4/331; *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*; *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, entry "'aṣm"

the technical terminology of theologians, the well-known view among the Rationalists (*'Adliyya*) is that it is a divine grace (*lutf*) from God whereby there is no motivation to abandon obedience or commit disobedience, despite having the ability to do both.[2] According to the Ash'aris, it means "that God does not create any sin in them".[3] The scholar al-Jurjānī said: "Infallibility is a faculty for avoiding sins while having the ability to commit them".[4]

I say: What al-Sharīf mentioned is correct, while what is commonly cited is the divine cause for achieving infallibility. The truth is that infallibility is a deeply-rooted psychological faculty in the soul that absolutely prevents a person from disobedience. It is of the same nature as piety (*taqwā*) but represents its highest degree. Piety in ordinary people is a psychological quality that protects its possessor from committing many vices and sins. When it advances in its stages and rises in its ranks, it brings its possessor to the level of complete infallibility and absolute prevention from committing any reprehensible act. Indeed, it even prevents them from thinking about opposition or disobedience.[5]

Infallibility of the Prophets in Receiving and Conveying Divine Revelation

The majority of theologians from both Sunni and Shi'i schools maintain that the prophets are infallible in receiving and conveying divine revelation (*waḥy*). Infallibility at this stage has two aspects:

First: Infallibility from lying, and second: Infallibility from error or forgetfulness in receiving, comprehending, and delivering divine revelation. The first proof that will come later to establish infallibility

2. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 4/312; *Irshād al-Ṭālibīn*, 130
3. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/280
4. *Al-Ta'rīfāt*, 65
5. The mentioned definitions of infallibility (*'iṣma*) do not include infallibility from forgetfulness and ignorance. If you wish, you could say scientific infallibility, and its reality refers to complete and comprehensive knowledge of divine knowledge and rulings and what relates to the guidance of servants in their religious and worldly interests.

from sin also proves their infallibility in this domain, for complete trust in the prophets can only be achieved through absolute certainty in their protection from error in receiving, bearing, and delivering revelation, whether intentionally or through forgetfulness.

Furthermore, allowing for the possibility of error in conveying the message, even through forgetfulness, contradicts the purpose of prophethood, namely: conveying God's laws to people.

The infallibility of prophets in this domain is evidenced by God's words: "He is the Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His unseen to anyone, except to a messenger whom He has chosen. Then He sends before him and behind him observers, so that He may know that they have conveyed the messages of their Lord; and He encompasses all that is with them, and takes account of every single thing".[6]

These verses describe the path of revelation reaching the messengers, and from them to the people, as being guarded by protectors who prevent any defect or deviation in it, until it reaches people exactly as it was revealed from God. This is clearly understood from what the verse mentions about God placing observers between the messenger and those he was sent to ("before him") and between him and the source of revelation ("behind him"), who are the angels.

The Necessity of Prophetic Infallibility from Sins

There are many rational proofs for the necessity of prophetic infallibility. We will suffice with presenting two of them:

1. Trust is Dependent on Infallibility

Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī said: "Infallibility is necessary in a prophet to establish trust, thus achieving the intended purpose."

The explanation - as al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī stated:

If those who received the message were to allow for the possibility of lying and disobedience from the prophets, they would also allow for this possibility in their commands, prohibitions, and actions which they were ordered to follow. In such a case, they would not

6. Qur'an, 72:26-28

comply with their commands, which would defeat the purpose of prophethood.[7] In other words - as al-'Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī said: "Conveying the message encompasses both word and deed, for there is conveyance in action just as there is in speech. Thus, the messenger is infallible from disobedience through committing forbidden acts and abandoning religious obligations, because doing so would convey something that contradicts religion, so he is infallible from committing sins".[8]

If you were to say: This proof establishes nothing more than the prophets' infallibility after being sent as messengers.

I would respond: If the prophet's conduct before being sent as a messenger contradicted what he became afterward, complete trust in him would not be achieved even if he became an exemplary person. Therefore, achieving the complete purpose of prophethood depends on his infallibility throughout all periods of his life. Sayyid al-Murtaḍā says in response to this question:

"We know that one whom we consider capable of disbelief and major sins in any state, even if they repented from them... we do not feel secure in accepting their word as we feel secure with one whom we consider incapable of that in any state or in any way... Therefore, the possibility of major sins before prophethood is not less significant than their possibility during prophethood, nor is it lesser in rank in terms of causing aversion."[9]

2. Education Depends on the Educator's Actions

The general purpose for which the prophets were sent is the purification and education of people. Without doubt, the impact of education through action is stronger, deeper, and more emphatic than through preaching and guidance. This is because the correspondence between the stages of speech and action is the main factor in others' submission to the rightfulness of a reformer and educator's teachings. This educational principle leads us to say that the

7. *Kashf al-Murād*, 274
8. *Al-Mīzān*, 20/57
9. *Tanzīh al-Anbiyā'*: 5

complete education intended from sending the prophets is only achieved through their actions matching their words. Just as this necessitates infallibility (*'iṣma*) after being sent, it also requires it beforehand, because people's backgrounds and records of past actions influence others' acceptance of their words and guidance.[10]

3. The Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'an

When the infallibility of the prophets in conveying the message is established, it becomes permissible to rely on their words regarding infallibility from sins. In light of this, we say: The Qur'an describes the prophets' infallibility through subtle and precise expressions. We will suffice with pointing to one example of these. God said - after mentioning several prophets: "These are the ones whom God has guided, so follow their guidance".[11]

And He said in another place: "And whoever God guides, there is none who can lead him astray".[12]

Then He clarified that sin is misguidance by saying: "And indeed he (Satan) has led astray from among you many people".[13]

Thus, if the prophets are guided by God's guidance, and whoever God guides cannot be touched by misguidance, and sin is itself misguidance, then it follows that sin has no way to reach the prophets.

Infallibility from Error in Applying Religious Law and Ordinary Matters

The protection of the Prophet from error and mistake in applying religious law (such as forgetting during prayer or making mistakes in implementing legal punishments) and ordinary matters related to his

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10. The theologians (*mutakallimīn*) have established many proofs for the infallibility of the prophets. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī mentioned three, al-Qūshjī added two more proofs to these, and al-Ījī mentioned nine proofs, though some of these are not general proofs but are specific to their infallibility after being sent. See regarding this: *Kashf al-Murād*: 274; *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*: 358; *al-Mawāqif*: 2/359-360.

11. Qur'an, 6:90

12. Qur'an, 39:37

13. Qur'an, 36:62

personal life (such as errors in his financial dealings with people) is a topic discussed in theology (*kalām*), and theologians have extensively debated it. The apparent position of the Ash'aris and Mu'tazilites is that they allow for the possibility of forgetfulness from prophets in this domain, as they permit minor sins from them, so allowing forgetfulness is even more fitting. As for the Imamis, al-Ṣadūq and his teacher Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd permitted it[14], but the majority of scholars hold the opposite view.[15] Several of them have written books and treatises rejecting forgetfulness from the Prophet, and al-ʿAllāma al-Majlisī has detailed this issue in *al-Biḥār*[16], extensively explaining the irregularity of the reports relied upon by those who claim forgetfulness, and Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh Shubbar has critiqued them with multiple arguments in his books *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*[17] and *Maṣābīḥ al-Anwār*.[18] The truth is that the rational proof indicating the necessity of the Prophet's infallibility in conveying the message equally indicates his infallibility from error in applying religious law and his personal affairs, for...

[The text appears to be incomplete at this point, but continues with:] ...avoiding sin, resulting in the negation of every noble and praiseworthy quality attributed to him for avoiding sins and misdeeds.

This is refuted by the fact that the infallible one is capable of committing sins by virtue of the power and free will given to him, but his elevated piety, knowledge of sin's consequences, and awareness of the Creator's greatness prevent him from it. He is like the compassionate father who would not slaughter his child even if given the earth's weight in gold, though he is capable of cutting his throat just as he could cut his enemy's throat. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī says:

"The faculty of infallibility (*ʿiṣma*) does not change human nature's free choice in voluntary actions nor force it into the realm of

14. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, 444
15. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, 444
16. Qur'an, 30:30
17. Qur'an, 17:36
18. Qur'an, 43:23

compulsion and necessity. How could it, when knowledge is one of the foundations of choice, like someone seeking safety who becomes certain that a liquid is lethal poison - they voluntarily refrain from drinking it."[19]

This is similar to the occurrence of evil from God for while it is possible in essence and falls within the scope of His power - as He could theoretically condemn the obedient to hellfire - it does not occur from Him because it would contradict wisdom and what He has promised.

Thus, infallibility (*'iṣma*) is a gift bestowed upon one whom God knows will, by their own choice, benefit from it in avoiding evil deeds, making it a source of pride worthy of praise and honor. Shaykh al-Mufīd likened infallibility to a rope given to a drowning person to grasp and be saved - the drowning person has the choice to either grab the rope and survive, or not and drown.

19. *Al-Mīzān*, 11/163

PART VI

ON THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUHAMMAD (S.A.W.)

39

THE FINAL MESSENGER

Having completed our discussion of general prophethood, we must now examine specific prophethood, namely: the prophethood of Islam's Prophet Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh (s.a.w.).

He (s.a.w.) was born in Mecca in 570 CE and began his mission in the early seventh century (610 CE). He first began by calling his relatives and clan, and after several years - during which he managed to guide some of his clan - he directed his message to all people. He then continued his mission while people were divided between believers who sacrificed themselves and their possessions for his cause, and enemies who opposed him and sought opportunities to destroy and kill him. When he sensed danger, he left his homeland for the city of Yathrib, where he stayed for ten years until he answered death's call in 633 CE.

Reflecting on the effects of his (s.a.w.) message leads one to acknowledge that it had distinctive features and characteristics that set it apart from others:

1. The unprecedented speed of its spread across the human

world, especially among civilized nations, at a rate history had never witnessed before.

2. The believing community's preservation of the civilizations of conquered nations and opened territories, which distinguished it from other human revolutions. Islamic civilization thus became a complete human civilization in all dimensions, preserving previous Greek, Roman, and Persian civilizations, as well as modern industrial civilization.
3. The sacrifice of his followers and their dedication to his cause, to the extent that they gave everything they possessed, both small and great, for its victory and elevation.

The Qur'an mentions other features of the Muhammadan message, most importantly the universality of the message and its finality. Therefore, any fair person seeking truth must investigate the reality of this message and the validity of its proofs. In our discussion of general prophethood, we identified three ways to verify the truthfulness of one who claims prophethood: performing miracles, confirmation and explicit designation by a previous prophet, and evidence indicating the truthfulness of his claim. Here we will focus only on explaining the path of miracles.

40

THE RHETORICAL MIRACLE OF THE QUR'AN

History has recorded that the Prophet of Islam had many miracles at crucial moments, but he focused on his eternal miracle, which is the Qur'an. We will limit our discussion to this eternal miracle and say:

Divine wisdom necessitated that the eternal religion be accompanied by an eternal miracle, so that the proof would be established for all generations and centuries until the Day of Judgment: "So that mankind might have no argument against God after the messengers"[1] and so that "God's conclusive proof"[2] would be established over people in every time and place.

The Qur'an has a special quality in both word and meaning that distinguishes it from all other speech, whether it comes from the greatest masters of eloquence and rhetoric or from others. This is what the Arabs contemporary to the time of the message perceived, and we who live in the beginning of the fifteenth century after the Prophet's migration (s.a.w.) claim that the Qur'an has remained miraculous until now, and that it is too elevated to be challenged or

1. Qur'an, 4:65
2. Qur'an, 6:149

matched or replicated ever. The clear evidence for the Qur'an's miracle in eloquence and rhetoric is that the Arabs at the time of the message and before it were at a high level of eloquence and rhetoric, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) had lived among them for forty years without producing speech that would challenge them. Then when he claimed prophethood and brought forth the Qur'an and challenged them with it as proof of the truth of his claim, the polytheists were unable to match it, even though they struggled against him with everything in their power and endured many difficulties and calamities in this regard. If it had been possible for them to oppose the Prophet (s.a.w.) by producing speech that matched the Qur'an in eloquence and rhetoric, they would have undoubtedly done so. Had they done this, it would have been transmitted in history through multiple chains of narration due to the many claims about it and the large number of opponents and adversaries of Islam.

The Arab Masters of Rhetoric Acknowledge the Qur'an's Rhetorical Miracle

History has recorded the acknowledgment of a large group of Arab masters of rhetoric regarding this matter. Here are some examples:

a. Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra: Al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra was an elderly shaykh and one of the Arab rulers to whom people would bring their disputes and recite poetry. Whatever poetry he chose was considered exemplary and selected. History records that he heard verses from the Qur'an when the Prophet (s.a.w.) was reciting them, and when he heard this, he went to the gathering of his people, the Banū Makhzūm, and said:

"By God, I have just heard words from Muhammad that are neither the speech of humans nor of jinn. It has sweetness,

and it has grace. Its highest part is fruitful, and its lowest part is abundant. It surely rises high and nothing rises above it."[3]

b. ʿUtba ibn Rabīʿa: ʿUtba ibn Rabīʿa heard verses from the Qur'an that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) recited to him[4], and he returned to his companions and said to them:

"I have heard words that, by God, I have never heard the like of before. By God, it is neither poetry, nor sorcery, nor sooth-saying... By God, the words I heard from him will surely have momentous consequences."[5]

c. Three of Quraysh's Masters of Rhetoric: The Qur'an tells us that the polytheists advised each other not to listen to the Qur'an and to make noise during its recitation in the verse:

"Those who disbelieve say: 'Do not listen to this Qur'an and make noise during its recitation so that you may overcome.'"[6] Nevertheless, those who were initially preventing the youth from hearing the Qur'an broke their own pledge due to their intense pleasure in hearing it. These three masters of rhetoric and nobles of Quraysh were: Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, Abū Jahl ibn Hishām, and al-Akhnas ibn Sharīq. They went out one night to listen to the words of the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) while he was praying at night in his house. Each of them took a place to listen from, and none knew of the others' presence. They spent the night listening to him until dawn broke, then they dispersed. The road brought them together, and they said to one another: "Do not return, for if some of your foolish

3. *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, 5/387
4. It is thirty-seven verses from Sūrat Fuṣṣilat
5. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* by Ibn Hishām, 1/294, and it is a long story from which we have mentioned the relevant part
6. Qur'an, 41:26

ones saw you, you would put something in their minds." Then they left.[7] However, they returned on two other nights doing the same thing.

This was only because the Qur'an was captivating speech due to the sweetness of its words and the eloquence of its meanings, magnificent in its composition and style, and it had no equal among them.

d. Al-Ṭufayl ibn ʿAmr al-Dawsī: Among the snares that the Prophet's (s.a.w.) enemies laid to prevent constrain the Qur'an's influence was stopping prominent polytheists from meeting the Messenger (s.a.w.). One of these individuals was al-Ṭufayl, who was a noble man, a poet, and intelligent. When he came to Mecca while the Messenger of God was there, some men from Quraysh approached him and warned him against listening to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) words, going to great lengths in this. Al-Ṭufayl says:

"By God, they kept at me until I resolved not to listen to anything from him nor speak to him, to the point that I stuffed cotton in my ears when I went to the mosque... I went to the mosque, and there was the Messenger of God standing in prayer near the Kaʿba. I stood close to him, but God refused except that I should hear some of his words, and I heard beautiful speech. I said to myself, 'May my mother be bereft of me! By God, I am an intelligent man, a poet, and the difference between good and bad does not escape me. So what prevents me from listening to this man? If what he brings is good, I will accept it, and if it is bad, I will leave it.' I stayed until the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) left for his house. I followed him, and when he entered his house, I entered after him and said: 'O Muhammad, your people said such and such to me. By

7. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 1/315

> God, they kept frightening me about your matter until I stuffed cotton in my ears lest I hear your words. Then God refused except that I should hear your words, and I heard beautiful speech, so present your matter to me.'
>
> He said: 'The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) presented Islam to me and recited the Qur'an to me. By God, I have never heard speech more beautiful than it, nor a matter more just than it, so I embraced Islam and bore witness to the truth.'"[8]

Critique of the Doctrine of Divine Aversion (*Ṣarfa*)

The prevailing view among Muslims regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is that it represents the highest level of eloquence and the ultimate degree of rhetoric, along with its unique composition and extraordinary style. Another doctrine emerged in the third century known as the doctrine of divine aversion (*ṣarfa*), which was adopted by a group of theologians. The earliest person to whom this view was attributed was Abū Isḥāq al-Naẓẓām, followed by Abū Isḥāq al-Naṣībī, ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān al-Ṣaymarī, Hishām ibn ʿAmr al-Fūṭī, and others from the Muʿtazilites. Among the Imamis, it was chosen by Shaykh al-Mufīd in *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*, though something else was reported from him, and by al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā in a treatise he called *Al-Mūḍiḥ ʿan Jihat Iʿjāz al-Qur'an*, and by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī in his explanation of the Sayyid's statements, though he retracted it in his book *Al-Iqtiṣād*, and by Ibn Sinān al-Khafājī (d. 464 AH/1072 CE) in his book *Sirr al-Faṣāḥa*.

The essence of this doctrine is that producing something like the Qur'an in terms of eloquence, rhetoric, magnificence of composition, and originality of style is not beyond human capability. Rather, the inability and defeat in the arena of competition is due to another factor, which is that God prevented them from producing anything

8. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 1/382-383

like it. God, to prove the challenge, prevented the eloquent and articulate Arabs from producing anything like it.

Several points of discussion and objection have been raised against this doctrine. We will suffice with mentioning three of them:

First: What is readily understood from the verses of challenge is that the Qur'an is inherently transcendent, possessing the highest qualities and perfect miracles, such that it is correct to say about it:

"Say: If mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support."[9,10]

Second: If the Arabs' inability to match it was due to a sudden occurrence that nullified their expressive powers, it would have been reported that they attempted to challenge it but were surprised by something unexpected. This would have been a source of wonder for them, and they would have announced it to people, seeking excuses for themselves and diminishing the inherent value of the Qur'an.[11]

Third: If the miraculous nature of the Qur'an was due to divine aversion (*ṣarfa*) as they claimed, they would not have been in awe of the Qur'an's eloquence, nor would they have shown amazement at its rhetoric and excellent eloquence, as was reported about al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra. For it is known that whenever an eloquent and articulate person heard the Qur'an being recited, their mind was astounded and their intellect bewildered. This was only due to what struck their ears of the subtle composition and excellent placement of expressions in every admonition and narration of every story. If it were as the proponents of divine aversion claimed, there would have been no reason for amazement at its eloquence. Since we necessarily know of their admiration for its rhetoric, this indicates the invalidity of this doctrine.[12]

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9. Qur'an, 17:88
10. See: *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'an*, 21
11. See: *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an* by al-Zurqānī, 2/314
12. *Al-Ṭirāz*, 3/393-394, and there are other discussions on the theory of prevention (*ṣarfa*) mentioned in *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 2/327-322

41

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE QUR'AN'S MIRACULOUS NATURE

You have learned about the rhetorical miracle of the Qur'an, but it has other miraculous aspects that are not limited to those who know the Arabic language and are versed in the arts of rhetoric. This universality of its miraculous nature is indicated by God's words:

"Say: If mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support."[1]

If the challenge was only about the Qur'an's rhetorical eloquence and the magnificence of its style, the challenge would not have extended beyond the pure Arabs. Yet the verse addresses both mankind and jinn. The extension of the challenge to both species is only because it encompasses all possible aspects of excellence in attributes. Thus, the Qur'an is a sign for the eloquent in its rhetoric and eloquence, for the wise in its wisdom, for the scholar in its knowledge, for legislators in their legislation, for politicians in their politics, and for all creation in what they cannot collectively attain, such as knowledge of the unseen and the absence of contradiction in

1. Qur'an, 17:88

judgment, knowledge, and expression. Here is an explanation of these aspects:

Absence of Contradiction and Inconsistency

Among the challenges of the Qur'an is the absence of contradiction and inconsistency in its verses, as it states: "Do they not ponder over the Qur'an? Had it been from other than God, they would have found in it much contradiction."[2]

To clarify this: Humans are naturally inclined toward change and development. One sees oneself as wiser each day than the day before, and what one produces today as more perfect and beautiful than what was produced yesterday. There is a valuable statement by the great writer ʿImād al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597 AH/1201 CE) in which he says:

"I have observed that no person writes a book in one day except that the next day they say: if this were changed it would be better, if this were added it would be more appealing, if this were moved forward it would be superior, and if this were omitted it would be more beautiful. This is one of the greatest lessons, and it is evidence of the dominance of imperfection over all humanity."

This is one aspect. From another aspect, the Qur'an was revealed gradually over a period of nearly twenty-three years, during different periods and varying circumstances of night and day, residence and travel, war and peace, hardship and ease, difficulty and comfort. It is known that these conditions affect thought and reasoning.

From a third aspect, the Qur'an has addressed various matters and expanded upon them in the best possible way. It has discussed theology, ethics, politics, legislation, narratives, and other matters pertaining to the Creator, humanity, and both celestial and terrestrial beings.

Despite all this, you find in it no contradiction or inconsistency, nor anything that reason and the rational would find disparate.

2. Qur'an, 4:82

Rather, its end connects to its beginning, and its details and branches return to its principles and roots. Such a book, as living consciousness determines, must have a speaker who is not governed by the passage of days nor affected by circumstances and conditions. It can only be divine speech and heavenly revelation.

Furthermore, the word "much" (*kathīran*) is a descriptive rather than a restrictive qualifier. The meaning is: had it been from other than God, they would have found in it contradiction, and that contradiction would have been abundant to the extent of the abundant contradiction found in everything that is from other than God. The verse does not aim to suggest that what is absent from the Qur'an is only abundant contradiction rather than minor contradiction.[3]

2. Foretelling the Unseen

The Qur'an contains predictions about human affairs in future stages and phases, and reports of conflicts, tribulations, and events that would occur in the future. If this foretelling indicates anything, it indicates that the Qur'an is a heavenly book that God revealed to one of His chosen messengers from among humanity. This is because it reported events that intuition and insight would have suggested otherwise, yet it proved truthful in all its reports. These cannot be attributed to mere coincidence, nor can they be compared to the predictions of soothsayers, fortune-tellers, and astrologers, whose habit is to express future events through symbols and metaphors to conceal their falsehood when predictions fail. This contrasts with the Qur'anic predictions, which speak of events with certainty and decisive logic. Here are examples:

The prediction of humanity's inability to produce anything like the Qur'an

God says:

3. See: *Al-Mīzān* by Sayyid al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (may his soul be sanctified), 5/20

"Say: If mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce its like, even if they assisted one another."[4]

And He also says:

"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call upon your witnesses other than God, if you are truthful. But if you do not - and you will never be able to do so."[5]

In these verses, we see the confident prediction that jinn and humans would be eternally incapable of producing anything like the Qur'an, and this prediction has proven true until now. So what source did the Prophet rely upon in making this challenge other than divine revelation from God?

The prediction of the Romans' victory over the Persians

God says:

"Alif, Lam, Mim. The Romans have been defeated in the nearest land, and after their defeat, they will be victorious within a few years. To God belongs the command before and after, and on that day the believers will rejoice."[6]

History records that the Roman Empire - which was Christian - was defeated by the Persian Empire - which was pagan - after fierce wars between them in 614 CE. The Muslims were saddened because it was a defeat of a divine state by a pagan one, while the polytheists rejoiced and mockingly said to the Muslims: "The Romans claim to be People of the Book yet were defeated by the Magians, and you claim that you will defeat us through the book revealed to you, but we will defeat you just as the Persians defeated the Romans."

At that time, these noble verses were revealed, foretelling that this Roman defeat would be followed by their victory within a few years -

4. Qur'an, 17:88
5. Qur'an, 2:23-24
6. Qur'an, 30:1-4

a period ranging between three and nine years. This prediction came despite circumstances and causes suggesting otherwise, because the fierce wars had exhausted the Roman Empire to the point where it was invaded in its own territory, as indicated by the words "in the nearest land," and because the Persian Empire was strong and fortified, made even stronger by their recent victory. However, God fulfilled His promise and the Qur'anic prediction was realized within a few years, as the Romans achieved victory in 622 CE.

Predicting the defeat of the enemy before encountering them

God says:

"And when God promised you one of the two groups that it would be yours, and you wished that the unarmed one would be yours. But God intended to establish the truth by His words and to eliminate the disbelievers."[7]

This verse was revealed before the Muslims encountered the enemy on the battlefield. The Prophet (s.a.w.) informed of the polytheists' defeat and the complete elimination of their power, as indicated by His words: "and to eliminate the disbelievers."

Predicting abundant progeny for the Prophet

God says: "Indeed, We have granted you abundance (*al-Kawthar*)." *Al-Kawthar* means abundant good, and here, as indicated by the words "Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off," it refers to the abundance of his (s.a.w.) progeny, meaning that God would grant His Prophet offspring who would remain throughout time.

Al-Rāzī said:

"Look how many of the Prophet's family were killed, yet the world is full of their descendants while none remain from the Umayyads worth mentioning. Then observe how many great scholars were

7. Qur'an, 8:7

among them, like al-Bāqir, al-Ṣādiq, al-Kāẓim, al-Riḍā, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and others like them."[8]

These are examples of the predictions of the Qur'an, and there are other predictions we have not mentioned for the sake of brevity.[9]

Informing About Universal Laws

There is no doubt that the highest purpose of the Qur'an is guidance, but this may depend on demonstrating the grandeur of the universe and its governing laws. For this reason, we see that the Qur'an pointed to some of these laws that were unknown to humans during the time of revelation, which scientists only discovered after many centuries. This is, in fact, a type of information about the unseen. Here are some examples:

a. Universal Gravitation:

God says: "God is He who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see."[10]

The verse affirms that the heavens have unseen pillars. If universal gravitation - as discovered by Newton and accepted as an established scientific law by natural scientists - is the pillar that holds up the heavens, then the verse refers to that force. The Qur'an used general terminology so that people in both past and present centuries could understand it. Al-Ṣadūq narrated from his father from al-Ḥusayn ibn Khālid from Abū l-Ḥasan al-Riḍā (a.s.) who said: I asked him about God's words "raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see?"

He said: "Glory be to God, does He not say 'without any pillars that you can see'?!"

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8. *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*, 8/498
9. See: *Mafāhīm al-Qur'an* by Shaykh Sobhani, 3/377-534
10. Qur'an, 13:2

I said: Yes. He said: "Then there are pillars, but they cannot be seen."[11]

b. The Earth's Motion:

The Qur'an points to the Earth's motion in God's words: "And you see the mountains, thinking them rigid, while they pass as the passing of clouds - the work of God, who perfected all things. Indeed, He is Aware of what you do."[12]

Some exegetes have restricted this verse to the Day of Resurrection because the preceding verse refers to it. However, there are indications that the verse refers to the worldly system, since the Day of Resurrection is a day of revealing truths and attaining certainty and acknowledgment, so it would not be appropriate to say:

"you think them rigid."

Furthermore, on the Day of Resurrection, the Earth will be changed into another Earth, while this verse observes the present condition of the mountains. This is indicated by the word "work" in His statement:

"the work of God, who perfected all things."

Also, the apparent meaning of His words "Indeed, He is Aware of what you do" refers to what humans do in their worldly life. The unity of context in the verbs used in the verse - namely "you see," "you think," "they pass," and "you do" - indicates that what is meant is the motion of mountains in the present system. Since mountains are firmly rooted in the Earth, their motion necessitates the Earth's motion. They are specifically mentioned to demonstrate the greatness of His power in moving these massive, heavy objects like clouds. The comparison of their motion to clouds indicates that the Earth's motion is, firstly, continuous, and secondly, occurs with calmness and stability.

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11. *Al-Burhān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* by 'Allāma Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī, 2/278
12. Qur'an, 27:88

c. The Role of Mountains in Earth's Stability:

The Qur'an discusses the secrets and benefits of mountains in various verses, including that they preserve sections of the Earth's crust, protecting them from dispersion and scattering, just as pegs and nails prevent wooden pieces from separating. God says:

"And He cast into the earth firmly set mountains, lest it shift with you, and rivers and roads that you might be guided."[13]

And there are other verses like this. Professors of physics and earth topography explain how mountains serve as pegs for the Earth in a specific scientific way, which can only be understood by specialists in those sciences and those familiar with their principles.[14] In conclusion, we emphasize what we mentioned at the beginning of this discussion: that the highest purpose of the Qur'an is guidance and purification, and it is not its function to explain matters of natural sciences and the like. It only addresses such matters occasionally to guide people to divine knowledge. Therefore, we should not exaggerate this type of miracle by applying Qur'anic verses to scientific findings even when they are not apparent in them. Rather, we must rely in their exegesis on the Qur'an itself or on reliable traditions from the bearer of the law and those whom He made companions of the Qur'an and its equals - may God's blessings be upon him and all of them.

4. Comprehensiveness in Legislation

The Qur'anic legislation is comprehensive, encompassing all vital aspects of human life and addressing human needs in all domains, from beliefs and ethics to politics and economics, among others. The very existence of these laws across all these aspects is a great miracle that neither human capability nor legal committees could achieve,

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13. Qur'an, 16:15

14. See regarding this: Commentary on *Sūrat al-Ra'd* by our teacher (may his shadow continue) "*Qur'an wa Asrār-e Āfarīnish*" (in Persian)

especially given their special flexibility that accommodates all civilizations and societies, both primitive and industrially advanced. Imam al-Bāqir (a.s.) says in this regard:

"Indeed, God the Exalted has not left anything that the community needs except that He has revealed it in His Book and explained it to His Messenger, and He has set a limit for everything, and established evidence indicating it."[15]

Clear proof of this is that when Muslims extended their state's influence over more than half the inhabited world, despite Earth's nations differing in customs, events, and circumstances, they nonetheless built the Islamic civilization and managed Islamic society for centuries under the guidance of the Qur'an and *Sunna* without needing foreign legislation. We will return to this discussion when addressing the topic of finality.

5. The Illiteracy of the Message Bearer

The historical records of the bearer of the message provide the clearest evidence that he never attended school nor studied under anyone to learn writing. The Qur'an explicitly states this:

"And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand. Otherwise the falsifiers would have had doubt."[16]

Moreover, he lived and was raised in a land whose people were deprived of the arts of knowledge and civilization at that time, which is why the Qur'an described them as "unlettered" (*ummiyyīn*). Despite the fallacious arguments of Western clergy and Westernized individuals, their reliance on reports from unknown sources, and the fabrications of atheists in this matter, the illiteracy of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his people is supported by clear evidence from the Qur'an, history, and hadith.[17]

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15. *Al-Kāfī*, 1/59
16. Qur'an, 29:48
17. See regarding this: *Mafāhīm al-Qur'an*, 3/321-327

Indeed, when the Arab orators and eloquent speakers felt their inability to challenge the Qur'an and realized it was not of human speech, they accused him of reciting tales of the ancients that were dictated to him morning and evening by a human being.[18] God responds to this with His words:

"The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, while this is in clear Arabic language."[19]

Anyone who considers that simple environment would acknowledge that it is impossible for such an exceptional personality as the Prophet (s.a.w.) and a book like his to emerge from it unless connected to a great power governing the universe. Similarly, when comparing what the Qur'an explains regarding knowledge and the stories of divine prophets with the Old and New Testaments, it becomes clear that the Qur'an was not influenced by them. Rather, it becomes evident that what is in the Testaments is not divine revelation but rather the creations of rabbis and monks who mixed good deeds with bad ones and thus corrupted the heavenly books with their myths.[20] Regarding this, ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī says:

"Whoever reads the two Testaments and contemplates their contents, then returns to the historical accounts in the Qur'an about previous prophets and their nations, will see that the history is different and the story is different. The Testaments contain stumbles and sins attributed to God's righteous prophets that human nature recoils from attributing even to ordinary righteous and rational people, while the Qur'an absolves them of these."[21]

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18. God says: "And they say: Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated to him morning and evening" (Qur'an, 25:5). And He says: "We know indeed that they say, 'It is a man that teaches him'" (Qur'an, 16:103). They had various interpretations of this. According to Ibn ʿAbbās: Quraysh said that Balʿām taught him, and he was a Roman Christian blacksmith in Mecca. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk said: It refers to Salmān al-Fārsī, they said he learns stories from him, and other things were said. See: *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, 3/386 and *Al-Kashshāf*, 3/218

19. Qur'an, 16:103

20. For examples of these myths and falsehoods in explaining the stories of the prophets, see: *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 2/361-376

21. *Al-Mīzān*, 1/64

42

THE FINALITY OF PROPHETHOOD IN LIGHT OF REASON AND REVELATION

The Islamic community agrees that their Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is the seal of the prophets, his law is the final law, and his book is the final heavenly book. This is supported by texts from the Qur'an and *Sunna* which we will indicate, then we will answer questions about finality.

The Qur'an explicitly states that he is the seal of the prophets, saying: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the seal of the prophets."[1]

The seal (*khatm*) means reaching the end of something; one says: "I sealed the work" and "the reciter sealed the chapter," and the seal, which is stamping something, is also from this category, because stamping something only occurs after reaching its end.[2] Furthermore, the sealing of prophethood necessitates the sealing of messengership, because messengership is the conveying of what the messenger carries through revelation. When revelation and connection to the highest source is cut off, there remains no subject for messengership. There are other verses that indicate the finality of the

1. Qur'an, 33:40
2. *Mu'jam al-Maqāyīs fī al-Lugha*, entry "khatama"

Muhammadan message, either explicitly or implicitly, which would take too long to mention.

Among the hadiths that explicitly state finality is the Hadith of Status (*ḥadīth al-manzila*), which is agreed upon by the community. The Prophet (s.a.w.) placed himself in the position of Moses, and placed Ali (a.s.) in the position of Aaron, saying to Ali (a.s.): "You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me."[3] The hadith's indication of finality is clear, just as its indication of Ali's (a.s.) succession to the Prophet (s.a.w.) after his departure is clear, as will be explained to you in the chapter on leadership (*Imāma*).

Ali (a.s.) said: "He sent him during an interval between messengers and a dispute among tongues, so He made the messengers follow with him and sealed revelation with him."[4] There are many other mutually supporting texts regarding this.[5]

A Flimsy Objection

Some flimsy objections have been raised against finality that are not worth answering, as anyone familiar with the Qur'an, tradition, and Arabic literature would recognize. However, to demonstrate the weakness of these objections[6], we will present what is considered one of the strongest among them, and then return to discussing an important question about finality that is worthy of research and discussion. The objection is: How can Muslims claim that the door of prophethood and messengership is closed, when their scripture explicitly states that these doors remain open until the Day of Judgment, where it says:

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3. Narrated by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3/58; Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2/323; Ibn Mājah in his *Sunan*, 1/28; al-Ḥākim in his *Mustadrak*, 3/109; and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his *Musnad*, 1/331 and 2/369, 437. As for the Imāmiyya, they have unanimously transmitted it in their hadith collections
4. *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 133
5. See regarding this: *Mafāhīm al-Qur'an*, 3/148-179
6. To understand these and their answers, see: Previous source, 185-216

"O Children of Adam! If there come to you messengers from among you relating to you My verses, then whoever fears God and reforms - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."[7]

The answer is that this verse relates to an address that God made to the Children of Adam at the beginning of creation, at the time when Adam descended to Earth. This address is not among those originated during the era of the Message such that it would contradict its finality. Rather, it is a narration of the address that was issued after our father Adam's descent to Earth. Two things demonstrate this:

First: The context of the verses preceding this verse.

Second: God's statement in another place: "Go down from it, all of you, as enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [nor suffer].[8]

His saying "And if there should come to you guidance from Me" has the same meaning as "If there come to you messengers from among you relating to you My verses."

Finality and the Eternality of Islamic Law

Here there is a question we must answer: The expansion of civilization requires society to organize new laws that exceed what was needed in the past. Since civilization and needs are constantly increasing and evolving, how can the limited laws found in the Qur'an and tradition address unlimited emerging needs?

The answer is that the eternality of Islamic law and its sufficiency apart from any other legislation is based on the following matters:

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7. Qur'an, 7:35
8. Qur'an, 20:123

The Authority of Reason in Specific Domains

The Qur'an and tradition acknowledge the authority (*ḥujjīya*) of reason in specific domains where judgment is referred to it. These instances have been explained in books of jurisprudential principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). There are cases where rational judgments reveal religious rulings, such as reason's independent recognition of the repugnance of punishment without explanation, which necessitates that neither prohibition nor obligation can be established without explanation. Similarly, reason independently recognizes the necessity of avoiding all possibilities in cases of general knowledge regarding prohibited matters, and the necessity of definitive compliance in cases of obligatory matters, as well as the necessity of obeying apparent commands.

Among the applications of this principle is the rule of the more important versus the less important (*al-ahamm wa-l-muhimm*).

To explain: It is clearly understood from the Qur'an that religious rulings are dependent on benefits and harms (*maṣāliḥ wa mafāsid*). Since benefits and harms have different degrees and levels, jurists have established a chapter on the conflict and clash of rulings, where they prioritize the more important over the less important, and the greater benefit over the lesser. Opening this door has helped resolve many social problems that the ignorant might imagine would impede Muslims' progress in life's struggles.

Since this discussion belongs to the science of jurisprudential principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), we will limit ourselves to this much and conclude with a tradition from Imam Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a.s.) addressing his student Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, saying: "God has two proofs (*ḥujja*) over people: an external proof and an internal proof. As for the external proof, it is the messengers, prophets, and Imams, and as for the internal proof, it is reason."[9]

9. *Al-Kāfī*, 1/16

The Legislation of Independent Legal Reasoning

Among God's great gifts to the Islamic community is the legislation of independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*). Independent legal reasoning was practiced in its simple form among the Companions and their Followers, just as it remained open among the companions of the pure Imams (a.s.).

Some governments in Islamic societies committed an offense when they closed the door of independent legal reasoning in the middle of the seventh century and deprived the Islamic community of this great gift. Al-Maqrīzī states:

"The appointment of the four judges continued from the year 665, until no school of Islamic law remained known in all Islamic territories except these four. Anyone who followed another school was opposed and condemned. No judge was appointed, nor was anyone's testimony accepted unless they were an imitator (*muqallid*) of one of these schools..."[10]

Among the promising developments is that more than one scholar among the Sunni scholars of insight has taken an objective stance and recognized the necessity of reopening this door after its closure for centuries.[11]

The Islamic Ruler's Authority and Affairs

Among the reasons that make Islamic legislation suitable for solving problems is that it grants the Islamic ruler all the powers that lead to the right of absolute discretion in everything he sees as beneficial for the community. He enjoys the same absolute authority enjoyed by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the infallible Imam (a.s.), except for what is considered among their exclusive characteristics.

Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Nā'īnī (may his soul be sanctified) said:

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10. *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Maqrīziyya*, 2/344

11. See: *Tārīkh Ḥaṣr al-Ijtihād* by 'Allāma al-Ṭihrānī, and *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif* by Farīd Wajdī, entries "jahd" and "dhahaba"

"The Islamic ruler has been delegated the authority to establish whatever regulations he deems necessary for the community's benefit and to meet its needs within the framework of Islamic laws."[12] There is a valuable statement by Imam al-Khumaynī (may his soul be sanctified) which we quote in full:

"When an Islamic ruler succeeds in establishing an Islamic government in any Islamic region or in all Islamic territories, and he possesses the necessary qualifications and competencies - particularly extensive knowledge and justice - Muslims must obey him. He has the same rights, positions, and authority as the noble Prophet (s.a.w.) in matters such as organizing military forces, supporting them through conscription, appointing governors, collecting taxes, and spending them appropriately, among other things...

This does not mean that Islamic jurists and rulers are like the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Imams (a.s.) in all aspects and stations, including spiritual virtues and spiritual ranks, for this would be a trivial opinion not to be relied upon. The discussion concerns only the duties assigned to the Islamic ruler and placed upon his shoulders, not spiritual stations and virtuous qualities, for they [the Prophet and Imams] - may God's blessings be upon them - are at a level in this domain that none can reach their status nor come close to their excellence, as evidenced by their magnificent texts and statements."[13]

The Laws That Have a Limiting Role

Among the reasons that make Qur'anic legislation applicable to all civilizations is its establishment of specific laws that have a limiting and regulatory role in relation to its general legislation. These governing laws give this religion the flexibility to accommodate all generations and centuries.

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12. *Tanbīh al-Umma wa Tanzīh al-Milla*, 97
13. *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, 63-66

God says: "And He has not placed upon you any hardship in religion".[14]

And He says: "But whoever is forced by necessity, without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits, then there is no sin upon him. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful".[15]

And He says: "Except that to which you are compelled".[16]

And He says: "Except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith".[17]

The verses concerning the prohibition of harm all limit Qur'anic legislation within the bounds of hardship, difficulty, and harm. Without these governing limitations, Islamic law would not have been compatible with all human civilizations.

Moderation in Legislation

Among the reasons that make Islam suitable for permanence and immortality is that its legislation is based on moderation and is in accordance with human nature (*fiṭra*). It takes from worldly matters what benefits the servants of God, and likewise from matters of the hereafter. Just as it encourages worship, it also encourages seeking livelihood, and even encourages recreation and allowing the soul to enjoy its pleasures in legitimate ways.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said: "The believer has three time periods: a time when he communes with his Lord, a time when he maintains his livelihood, and a time when he allows himself to enjoy legitimate pleasures."[18]

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14. Qur'an, 22:78
15. Qur'an, 2:173
16. Qur'an, 6:119
17. Qur'an, 16:106
18. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Chapter on Wisdom, no. 390

PART VII

ON LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION (IMĀMA AND KHILĀFA)

43

WHY DO WE INVESTIGATE LEADERSHIP (IMĀMA)?

The first major disagreement that arose among Muslims after the departure of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) was the dispute over leadership (*imāma*) and succession (*khilāfa*). The community divided into two groups: one group supported Ali (a.s.) and another supported other caliphs. The discussion of how this disagreement occurred and its causes is beyond our current scope, as it is a historical investigation that falls under the study of religious sects and denominations. Our purpose here is to analyze the reality of leadership and its conditions according to the Shi'i and Sunni schools, in light of reason, revelation, and historical realities.

Some might say: The discussion about the form of succession after the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) essentially relates to a historical matter whose time has passed - namely, whether the successor after the Prophet was Imam Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) or Abu Bakr. What benefit do believers derive from discussing this matter that has no bearing on their present lives? Wouldn't it be better to abandon this discussion to preserve unity?

The answer is that undoubtedly it is the duty of the free Muslim to strive for unity, but this does not mean abandoning research entirely. If the research is impartial and objective, it can be effective in

unifying ranks and bringing viewpoints closer together. This is because each group then becomes familiar with the beliefs and principles of the other, consequently bringing the two groups closer. This is unlike abandoning research for fear of division, which can cause each group to harbor suspicions about the other's beliefs, perhaps even imagining the other group as foreign to Islam. This is the first point.

Secondly, the matter of succession after the Prophet (s.a.w.) has two dimensions: one is historical, whose time has passed, and the other is a religious dimension whose effects remain to this day and will continue thereafter. If the evidence indicates that Ali (a.s.) was appointed to leadership (*wilāya*) and succession (*khilāfa*) in the sense maintained by the Imamis, then the Imam, beyond being a leader of that era, was a reference point for resolving problems that arose after the Prophet's (s.a.w.) departure, as will be explained to you. Thus, Muslims must refer to him for the exegesis of the Qur'an and its elucidation, and in matters of emerging issues not addressed in the Qur'an and Tradition (*sunna*). The discussion is not limited to the political dimension that we might dismiss by claiming that what's past is past; rather, it has one or more enduring aspects.

While discussing leadership (*imāma*) and succession (*khilāfa*) might provoke disagreement, there is another, less contentious approach: examining who served as the scholarly reference for Muslims after the departure of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) regarding their academic questions and problems, and whether the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) appointed an individual or group to this position or not.

Discussing the matter in this way does not provoke controversy.

The Shi'a claim that the Prophetic Tradition confirmed the authority of the People of the House (a.s.) in matters of doctrine and religious issues, beyond the political leadership that was limited to a specific time. Among the clearest evidence is the widely transmitted Hadith of the Two Weighty Things (*ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*), accepted by both schools, whose authenticity is doubted only by the ignorant or obstinate. It has been transmitted through numerous chains from

more than twenty companions.[1] The authors of the authentic collections and biographical compilations narrated that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

"O people, I leave among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray: the Book of God and my family, the People of my House."

And in another instance he said:

"I leave among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray: the Book of God, a rope extended from heaven to earth, and my family, the People of my House. These two will never separate until they meet me at the Pool, so consider well how you treat them in my stead."

And there are other similar texts.

A close examination of this hadith reveals the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of the Pure Family, as they are paired with the Qur'an and it is stated that the two will never separate. It is well known that the Qur'an is a book that falsehood cannot approach from before it or behind it, so how could those who are paired with the Qur'an and equal to it err in their judgments, statements, and narrations?

Furthermore, the hadith states that whoever holds fast to the Family will not go astray. If they were not infallible and protected from disagreement and error, how could one who holds fast to them avoid going astray?

It also indicates that guidance through the Qur'an and understanding its knowledge and secrets requires an expert teacher who does not err in comprehending its truths and explaining its teachings. This can only be those whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) made companions of the Qur'an until the Day of Resurrection, namely the Pure

1. It suffices in this regard that Dār al-Taqrīb between Islamic schools of thought published a treatise collecting hadith sources. Among its many chains of transmission, we mention the following: *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 7/122; *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*: 2/307; *Musnad Aḥmad*: 3/17, 26, 59; 4/366, 371; 5/182, 189. The great hadith scholar Sayyid Ḥāmid Ḥusayn al-Hindī (may his soul be sanctified) compiled the chains of transmission of the hadith and recorded the statements of great scholars about it in his book *al-'Abaqāt*, publishing it in six volumes.

Family. In another hadith, he compared them to Noah's Ark, saying that whoever takes refuge with them in religious matters and derives their fundamental and secondary principles from them will be saved from the torment of hellfire, while whoever stays behind from them is like one who stayed behind from Noah's Ark on the day of the flood and was drowned.[2]

2. The hadith scholars narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that he said, "The example of my household among my nation is like that of Noah's ark - whoever boards it is saved, and whoever stays behind from it drowns." *Mustadrak al-Ḥākim*: 2/151; *al-Khaṣā 'iṣ al-Kubrā* by al-Suyūṭī: 2/266. The hadith has many chains and sources - whoever wishes to examine them should refer to *Ta 'ālīq Iḥqāq al-Ḥaqq*: 9/270-293.

44

THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP (IMĀMA) ACCORDING TO THE SHI'A AND SUNNI SCHOOLS

The leader (*imām*) in the language is one who is followed, whether a person, book, or otherwise, whether righteous or not, and its plural is leaders (*a'imma*).[1] And in God's words: "The day We will call every people by their leader" meaning by whom they follow, and it is said by their book.[2]

The theologians have defined leadership (*imāma*) in several ways:

1. Leadership (*imāma*) is general authority in matters of religion and worldly affairs;
2. Leadership is succession to the Messenger in establishing religion, such that the entire community must follow him;[3]

1. Its origin is "a'mima" on the pattern of "amthila". The mīm was merged into the following mīm after transferring its vowel to the hamza, and some grammarians change it to yā' for ease of pronunciation.
2. See: *al-Mufradāt* by al-Rāghib, Book of Alif, entry "umm"
3. These two definitions were mentioned by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī in *Kitāb al-Mawāqif*. See: *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/345

3. Leadership is succession to the bearer of divine law in protecting religion and managing worldly affairs;[4]
4. Leadership is general religious authority that includes encouraging all people to preserve their religious and worldly interests, and deterring them from what harms them accordingly.[5]

The majority of Sunni scholars agree that leadership is one of the branches of religion.

Al-Ghazālī said: "Know that examining leadership is not from the realm of rational matters, but rather from jurisprudence."[6]

Al-Āmidī said: "Know that discussion of leadership is not from the fundamentals of religious beliefs."[7]

Al-Ījī said: "For us, its discussions are from the branches, and we only mention it in theology following those before us."[8]

Ibn Khaldūn said: "The ultimate matter of leadership is that it is a consensual issue of public interest and does not belong to matters of belief."[9]

Al-Taftāzānī said: "There is no dispute that discussions of leadership are more suited to the science of branches..."[10]

As for the Imami Shi'a, they view leadership as a fundamental theological issue, equal to prophethood, except for the matter of receiving legislative revelation and bringing forth divine law, which was sealed with the departure of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.). Therefore, the question of leadership is among the foundational, fundamental issues.[11]

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4. Selected by Ibn Khaldūn in *al-Muqaddima*: 191
5. Selected by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī in *Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id*: 108
6. *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-I'tiqād*: 234
7. *Ghāyat al-Marām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*: 363
8. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/344
9. *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*: 465
10. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/232
11. I say: The difference between theological (*kalāmiyya*) and jurisprudential (*fiqhiyya*) matters lies in their subject matter. The subject of theological matters is the existence of God Almighty or His attributes and actions, while the subject of jurisprudential

Qualifications and Characteristics of the Leader

The Sunnis differ in their views regarding the required characteristics of the leader (*imām*). Some[12] say there are four qualities: knowledge, justice, understanding of political affairs and good management, and being from the Quraysh lineage. Others[13] add to these the soundness of senses and limbs, and courage. Still others[14] add maturity and masculinity. Al-Ījī said:

"The majority hold that the qualities of leadership are: being a scholar capable of independent reasoning (*mujtahid*) in both fundamentals and branches to manage religious affairs, having sound judgment to manage state affairs, and being courageous to defend the territory. Some say these qualities are not required because they cannot be found, making their requirement futile or an impossible obligation that leads to corruption which could be prevented by appointing someone lacking these qualities. Yes, he must be just to avoid tyranny, rational to properly manage affairs, mature due to the deficient intellect of children, male since women are deficient in intellect and religion, and free so that service to a master does not preoccupy him and so he is not looked down upon and disobeyed."[15]

The following observations can be made about these conditions:

First: Their disagreement about the number of conditions stems from their lack of a religious text regarding leadership. What they have are only general texts that do not specify these conditions. Their source for these conditions is juristic preference (*istiḥsān*) and rational considerations, which is quite surprising. How could the Prophet (s.a.w.) leave such an important matter undefined in terms of

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matters is the actions of accountable humans. According to the Imamiyya, the appointment of the Imam is an action of God Almighty, while according to Ahl al-Sunna, determining the Imam is the responsibility of Muslims.

12. He is Abū Manṣūr al-Baghdādī (d. 429 AH) in *Uṣūl al-Dīn*: 277
13. He is Abū al-Ḥasan al-Baghdādī (d. 450 AH) in *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*: 6
14. He is Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456 AH) in *al-Faṣl*: 4/186
15. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/349-350.

conditions and qualities, when he explained the simplest things including disliked and recommended acts?!

Second: The requirement of justice does not align with their position that a leader is not removed due to his corruption and oppression. Al-Bāqillānī said:

"The leader is not removed due to his corruption and oppression in usurping wealth, violating rights, and suspending legal punishments. Rising against him is not permitted. Rather, he must be advised and warned, and disobeyed only in matters that involve disobedience to God."[16]

Third: Islamic history shows that the caliphs after Ali (a.s.) lacked most of these qualifications, yet they still exercised the caliphate.

As for the Imami Shi'is, since they view leadership (*imāma*) as a continuation of the functions of prophethood - as previously mentioned - they consider that the leader must possess high qualifications that an individual can only attain through special divine care. He succeeds the Prophet (s.a.w.) in knowledge, infallibility (*'iṣma*), wise leadership, and other matters. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī said:

"Since we have established that the leader must be infallible, he must possess all the fundamentals of spiritual perfections, which are knowledge, chastity, courage, and justice... He must be the most excellent of the community in all that is considered spiritual perfection, because he is placed above them, and the one placed above must be more excellent, as placing one who is deficient above one who is more perfect is rationally repugnant. He must be free from all repulsive physical defects such as leprosy, vitiligo and the like, and from defects in his lineage and origin such as illegitimacy and baseness, because purity from these things serves as a divine grace that brings people closer to accepting his word and authority, so he must be thus."[17]

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16. *Al-Tamhīd*, 181. See also: *Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, 379; and *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya*, 185.
17. *Qawā'id al-Marām*, 179-180.

45

METHODS OF ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO SUNNIS

For Imami Shi'is, the method of establishing leadership is limited to explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) from the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the previous leader (*imām*), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

As for the Sunnis, it is not limited to this, but is also established through the pledge of allegiance (*bay'a*) from those who have the authority to bind and loose (*ahl al-ḥall wa-l-'aqd*). Al-Ījī said:

"The third objective concerns how leadership is established. It is established by designation from the Prophet and from the previous leader by consensus, and it is established by the pledge of allegiance from those who have the authority to bind and loose, contrary to the Shi'is. Our evidence is the establishment of Abu Bakr's leadership through pledge of allegiance."[1]

Then they differed regarding the number of people required to establish leadership, with various opinions. Al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH/1058 CE) said:

"The scholars differed regarding the number of those required to establish leadership, with various schools of thought: One group said

1. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, 8/351.

it is not established except by the majority of those who have the authority to bind and loose from every region, so that satisfaction with him is general and submission to his leadership is unanimous. This position is refuted by Abu Bakr's pledge of allegiance to the caliphate by the choice of those who were present, without waiting for those who were absent.

Another group said: The minimum number required to establish leadership is five who gather to contract it, or one of them contracts it with the approval of the other four, based on two arguments:

First: Abu Bakr's pledge of allegiance was established by five people who gathered for it, and then the people followed them. They were: 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Abu 'Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāḥ, Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr, Bishr ibn Sa'd, and Sālim, the freed slave of Abu Ḥudhayfa.

Second: 'Umar placed the consultation (*shūrā*) among six people so that one of them would be contracted with the approval of the other five. This is the opinion of most jurists and theologians from Basra.

Other scholars from Kufa said: Leadership is established by three people, with one of them assuming it with the approval of the other two, so they would be like a judge and two witnesses, just as a marriage contract is valid with a guardian and two witnesses.

Another group said: It is established by one person, because al-'Abbās said to 'Ali: "Extend your hand so I may pledge allegiance to you, and people will say that the Prophet's uncle has pledged allegiance to his cousin, so no two people will disagree with you." This is because it is a ruling, and the ruling of one person is effective."[2]

The following observations can be made about these statements and theories:

First: The position of their proponents is that of someone who believed in the validity of the caliphs' succession, and used this to support whatever opinion they held. This is arguing for a claim using the claim itself, which is clearly circular reasoning.

Second: This stark disagreement about how leadership should be

2. *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, 6-7.

contracted indicates the invalidity of the principle itself. For if leadership was delegated to the community, the Prophet (s.a.w.) would have explained its details and method of establishment. Contracting leadership to a person is no less important than a marriage contract between spouses, which both the Qur'an and Sunna took care to explain and define. It is strange that the leadership contract, upon which the life of the community depends, was not addressed in the texts - according to these people's claims - and its limits and conditions were not clarified.

It is surprising how these scholars remained silent about the enormous objections raised by the Companions themselves, both from the Helpers (*Anṣār*) and Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*), against the succession of the caliphs who were pledged allegiance by the five in the portico (*Saqīfa*), or Abu Bakr's appointment of 'Umar, or the six-person consultation. Anyone familiar with history sees how many Companions raised their voices in objection, to the point that al-Zubayr stood in the portico before those pledging allegiance with his sword drawn, saying:

"I will not sheathe it until 'Ali is given allegiance." 'Umar said: "Seize the dog!" They took his sword from his hand and struck it against a stone, breaking it."[3]

Is Consultation the Basis of Government and Succession?

The modernist theologians among the Sunnis have attempted to cast the form of Islamic government on the basis of consultation by making it equivalent to a popular referendum, citing two verses as evidence:

The first verse is God's statement: "And consult them in affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God."[4]

They argue that God commanded His Prophet to consult as

3. *Al-Imāma wa-l-Siyāsa*, 1/11.
4. Qur'an, 3:159.

instruction for the community so that they would consult on important matters, including succession.

This can be critiqued as follows: First, the address in the verse is directed to a ruler whose government is already established, commanding him to benefit from the opinions of his subjects. At most, what can be derived from the verse is that it is among the duties of all rulers to consult with the community. As for succession itself being established through consultation (*shūrā*), this cannot be proven by this verse.

Second, what is readily understood from the verse is that consultation does not impose a ruling on the ruler, nor bind him to anything. Rather, he examines different viewpoints and reviews various ideas, then adopts what he sees as beneficial, as God says: "Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God."

All of this indicates that the verse refers to matters other than succession and governance. For this reason, we do not find anyone present at the portico (*Saqīfa*) citing this verse as evidence.

The second verse is God's statement:

"And those who answer the call of their Lord, and establish prayer, and their affairs are conducted by mutual consultation among themselves, and who spend out of what We have provided them."[5]

They explain that the word "affairs" (*amr*) is connected to the pronoun "their" (*hum*) which indicates generality for all matters including succession, so the meaning of the verse becomes: the affairs of the believers in all cases are conducted through mutual consultation.

This can be critiqued as follows: The verse encourages consultation in matters that are connected to the affairs of the believers, not in matters outside their domain. Whether the appointment of the Imam falls within their affairs is the very point of contention, as we do not know – hypothetically – whether it is among their affairs or among the affairs of God. We do not know whether it is a divine authority and leadership that is accomplished through His appointment and

5. Qur'an, 42:38.

designation, or a popular authority and leadership in which people are permitted to intervene.

If you say: If consultation was not the basis of governance, why did Imam Ali (a.s.) use it as evidence against his opponent, saying to Muʿāwiya: "Indeed, the people who pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman have pledged allegiance to me on the same terms they pledged to them"?[6] I say: The appeal to consultation was from the perspective of dialectical argument, as he began his letter saying: "To proceed: My allegiance in Medina is binding upon you while you are in Syria, because those who pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr and Umar..."

He then concluded it by saying: "So enter into what the Muslims have entered."[7] Beginning the discourse by mentioning the caliphate of the two elders indicates that he was in the position of compelling Muʿāwiya, who considered allegiance a legitimate basis for succession. Were it not for this, there would have been no reason to mention the caliphate of the two elders, and he would have argued using consultation itself. If Imam Ali (a.s.) had viewed consultation as a legitimate foundation and source for succession, he would not have criticized the caliphate of the three caliphs before him, and his words (a.s.) in the *Shaqshaqiyya* sermon and elsewhere indicate that their caliphate was not legitimate. He (a.s.) only refrained from opposition or agreed with them in some governmental affairs for the sake of the interests of Islam and the Muslims.

The Noble Prophet's Vision of Leadership After Him

The transmitted words of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) indicate that he (s.a.w.) considered the matter of leadership after him to be a divine matter and a special right belonging to God, may He be exalted. When he (s.a.w.) invited the Banū ʿĀmir to Islam during their arrival

6. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Letters, No. 6.

7. Note: *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* by Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim (d. 212 AH): 29. Al-Raḍī omitted from the letter in *Nahj al-Balāgha* what did not concern him, as his focus was solely on rhetoric.

in Mecca for the pilgrimage season, their leader asked: "What do you think if we pledge allegiance to your cause, then God grants you victory over those who oppose you - would the authority belong to us after you?" He (s.a.w.) replied: "Authority (*amr*) belongs to God; He places it where He wills."[8] If the matter of succession had been in the hands of the community, he (s.a.w.) should have said that the authority belongs to the community, or to the people of authority and decision-making (*ahl al-ḥall wa-l-ʿaqd*), or something similar. Delegating the matter of succession to God Almighty clearly shows that it is like prophethood - He places it where He wills. God Almighty says: "God knows best where to place His message."[9]

The language is used in two identical contexts.

Furthermore, there are texts that point to what is established in reason: that leaving the community without a leader and imam is reprehensible for one who holds authority. Here is ʿĀʾisha saying to ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar: "O my son, convey my greetings to ʿUmar and tell him: do not leave Muhammad's community without a shepherd (*rāʿī*)."[10] She said this when ʿUmar was assassinated and felt death approaching, and he had sent his son to ʿĀʾisha seeking permission to be buried in her house alongside the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) and Abū Bakr.

And here is ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar saying to his father: "I have heard people saying something, and I swore to tell it to you. They claim that you have not appointed a successor, and if you had a camel-herder or shepherd who came to you having abandoned his flock, you would consider that he had neglected his duty. The shepherding of people is even more important."[11] Similarly, Muʿāwiya justified taking the pledge of allegiance for his son Yazīd by saying: "I disliked leaving Muhammad's community after me like sheep without a shepherd."[12]

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8. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya li-Ibn Hishām*, 2/424.
9. Qur'an, 6:124.
10. *Al-Imāma wa-l-Siyāsa*, 1/32.
11. *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, 1/44.
12. *Al-Imāma wa-l-Siyāsa*, 1/168.

If leaving the community without a shepherd is incorrect according to reason, how can these people attribute to the Prophet (s.a.w.) that he left the community without a shepherd?! It is as if these people were more compassionate toward the community than the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) - this is truly astonishing.

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PROOFS FOR THE NECESSITY OF DIVINE DESIGNATION IN THE IMAMATE ACCORDING TO TWELVER SHI'IS

The Imamate according to the Shi'a differs in its reality from what the Sunnis hold. It is a divine leadership and continuation of all the functions of prophethood except for receiving divine revelation. This necessitates that the Imam possess the conditions required for a prophet, except for being a recipient of legislative revelation. Based on this, the way of establishing the Imamate is restricted to designation from God and appointment by the Prophet (s.a.w.) or the previous Imam. Here are the proofs for this principle:

A) The Gaps left by the departure of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

The Prophet's (s.a.w.) responsibilities and actions were not limited to receiving divine revelation and conveying it to people. Rather, he also performed the following matters:

- He explained the noble Book, expounded its purposes, and unveiled its secrets. God says:"And We have sent down

to you the Reminder that you may explain to the people what has been sent down to them."[1]

- He judged between people in their disputes and conflicts. The Exalted said: "Indeed, We have sent down to you the Book in truth so that you may judge between people by what God has shown you, and do not be an advocate for the treacherous."[2]
- He explained the rulings concerning matters that arose during the time of his mission;
- He refuted doubts and answer difficult and suspicious questions raised by the enemies of Islam from among the Jews and Christians;
- He protected the religion from distortion and infiltration, and monitored what the Muslims had taken from him in terms of principles and branches of the faith so that they would not err in it.

These are the matters that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) practiced during his lifetime. It is known that his departure left an enormous void in these five areas, leaving Islamic legislation facing three possibilities:

First: That the Lawgiver would show no interest in filling these enormous voids that would occur after the Messenger. This possibility is entirely invalid and needs no discussion, as it does not align with the purpose of the mission, for leaving these voids would result in the loss of religion and law.

Second: That the community had reached, through the efforts of the mission's bearer in preparing them, a level where they could fill that void themselves. However, history and social calculations invalidate this possibility and prove that the community was not able to reach such heights to fill these gaps left by the absence of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.), neither in terms of exegesis, nor in resolving

1. Qur'an, 16:44.
2. Qur'an, 4:105.

disputes, nor in responding to skepticism and refuting doubts, nor in protecting the religion from deviation.

As for exegesis, the existence of extreme differences in the explanation of the verses of the Qur'an, even regarding the daily practices of Muslims, is sufficient evidence.

As for judging disputes and conflicts, this is evidenced by the inability of the caliphs and companions to do so in many cases, except for Imam ʿAlī (a.s.), who was the city of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) knowledge and the most qualified to judge by the explicit statement of the Seal of Prophethood (s.a.w.).

As for the domain of rulings, it suffices to note that the explanation of religious rulings occurred gradually according to the events and social needs during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.). It is known that this pattern continued after the Prophet, but what the Muslims inherited from him (s.a.w.) was not sufficient to address this need. The Qur'anic verses concerning rulings do not exceed three hundred verses, and as for the hadiths in this field, what the community inherited does not exceed five hundred hadiths, and this amount is not sufficient to answer all emerging issues.

By this we do not mean that Islamic law is deficient in fulfilling its legislative purposes or in encompassing emerging topics. Rather, the point is that the Prophet (s.a.w.) took into account people's needs and the requirements of temporal circumstances when conveying rulings. Therefore, to fulfill the purpose of legislation in a way that encompasses emerging topics and novel issues, it was necessary to entrust the laws of the religion to someone who would succeed him and take his place.

As for the domain of refuting doubts and skepticism and answering questions, an enormous void occurred after the Prophet's departure in this regard. The Jews and Christians came in succession, posing questions about the principles and branches of Islam, and the caliphs at that time were not able to provide correct answers to them, as evidenced by the history that is in our possession.

As for protecting Muslims from division and religion from deviation, the Islamic community was in dire need of someone to protect

their religion from distortion and its members from discord. History bears witness to the entry of numerous groups of Jewish scholars, Christian monks, and Zoroastrian priests among the Muslims, who began inserting Israelite traditions (*isrā'īliyyāt*), Christian legends, and Zoroastrian myths among them. It suffices to mention the hardships and travels that al-Bukhārī endured across various regions of the Islamic state, and what he subsequently narrated. He found that the hadiths circulating among the traditionists in Islamic territories exceeded six hundred thousand, of which he deemed no more than four thousand to be authentic. This was also the case with others who collected hadiths, and many of these hadiths that they considered authentic were subject to criticism and scrutiny by others.[3] This comprehensive research establishes a clear truth: that the community, despite its merit, was unable to fill the enormous voids left by the departure of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.), thus invalidating the second possibility regarding Islamic legislation after the era of prophecy.

The Third Possibility: That the founder of the message entrusted all the knowledge and rulings he received through revelation, and everything the community would need after him, to an exemplary personality who had the capacity to receive and bear this knowledge and these rulings, who would then fill this void after his departure (s.a.w.). After the invalidity of the first two possibilities, this possibility becomes inevitable, for the existence of an ideal person like the Prophet in qualifications, knowledgeable of religious law and teachings, is a guarantee for society's perfection and a necessary step toward its spiritual and moral advancement. Would it be permissible for God to neglect this essential matter in humanity's religious life?

God equipped humans with necessary faculties for their worldly material needs, so how could the neglect of this principal element in their spiritual and religious life be rational?! How beautiful are the words of the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.) regarding the

3. See: *Ḥayāt Muḥammad*, by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal: 49-50.

philosophy of this successor's existence and the extent of his influence on the community's perfection.

Imam ʿAlī (a.s.) said: "Indeed, O God, the earth is never devoid of one who maintains God's proof, whether manifest and well-known, or fearful and hidden, so that God's proofs and clear signs may not be invalidated."[4] And Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "The earth is never devoid of an Imam, so that if the believers add anything, he corrects them, and if they diminish anything, he completes it for them."[5] These traditions from the Imams of the People of the House (a.s.) express that the purpose which necessitated sending the Prophet also necessitates the existence of an Imam who succeeds the Prophet in all his characteristics, except for what the Qur'an has specified as exclusive to him, such as being a prophet, messenger, and bearer of divine law.

B) The Islamic Community and the Imminent Danger it was in

At the time of the Prophet's death, the Islamic state that was established by the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) was surrounded from the north and east by the two largest empires known in the history of that period. These empires possessed great power and might: Rome and Iran. The danger posed by the Iranian empire is evident in how its king wrote to his governor in Yemen - after receiving and tearing up the Prophet's letter inviting him to Islam: "Send two strong men from your region to bring me this man from the Hijaz."[6] The gravity of the Roman Empire's position is demonstrated by the numerous clashes between them and the Muslims in the eighth year after the migration (*hijra*), including the expedition of Mu'ta where the Islamic army's commanders were killed: Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib, Zayd ibn Ḥāritha, and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Rawāḥa. The Islamic army returned defeated from this battle. Because of this, the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) himself led the

4. *Nahj al-Balāgha*: Wisdom section, No. 147.
5. *Al-Kāfī*, 1/178, Hadith 2.
6. *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 2/145.

Islamic army to Tabūk in the ninth year to confront the Byzantine armies, but encountered no one. He stayed in Tabūk for several days then returned to Medina. Not content with this, he prepared an army in his final days under the leadership of Usāma ibn Zayd to face the Roman armies. This was the external situation.

As for internally, Islam and the Muslims were suffering under the weight of conspiracies by the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*) who formed an internal hostile front, similar to what is called a fifth column. These people professed Islam with their tongues but not their hearts, and they waited for opportunities to weaken the Islamic state by stirring up internal discord. The Qur'an exposed the hypocrites and publicized their plots against the religion and the Prophet in many chapters, and a special chapter was revealed concerning them.

The Qur'an's attention to addressing the hypocrites who were contemporary with the Prophet (s.a.w.) and present among the Companions is the clearest evidence that they were a major force, forming a substantial group and playing a malicious role in making way for Islam's enemies. Had it not been for the Prophet's wise leadership, they would have destroyed the foundation of the religion. This is sufficiently demonstrated by God's words:

"They had already sought to spread discord before and had plotted against you until the truth came and God's command prevailed, though they were averse."[7]

It was likely and anticipated that this dangerous triangle would unite to sweep away Islam and uproot it after the Prophet's death. In the face of this imminent danger, what was the duty of the wise leader who had established the foundations of his religion through great sacrifices? Did the greater good require appointing a wise leader knowledgeable in the rules and duties of leadership so that Muslims would unite under his banner and stand as one against that danger, or did the public interest require delegating the matter to the community to choose their own leader, despite what history tells us about the dominance of partisan spirit among Muslims at that time?

7. Qur'an, 9:48.

The disputes between the Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*) and the Helpers (*Anṣār*) on the day of the Portico (*Saqīfa*) are sufficient evidence of this.[8] The wise leader is one who attends to the social conditions of his community, observes the circumstances surrounding it, and plans accordingly for its future benefit. You have learned that these circumstances required appointing a leader and administrator, not leaving the matter to the community. This is what Shaykh al-Ra'īs Ibn Sīnā was referring to regarding the Imam when he said:

"Succession through explicit designation is more correct, as it does not lead to division, conflict and disagreement."[9]

C) Appointing the Imam is a manifestation of Divine Grace

This is the conclusion we have reached in explaining the necessity of the Prophet (s.a.w.) appointing a successor and Imam for the Islamic community, based on innate reason, study of Islamic history, and the affairs and serious responsibilities of the prophetic mission. This approach is similar to what our Imami scholars have taken in this field by relying on the principle of divine grace (*luṭf*). On this matter, al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā says:

"What proves our claim is that any rational person who knows custom and has mixed with people knows necessarily that the presence of a righteous leader whose command is effective and whose administration is sound leads to the elimination of oppression, division and transgression, or most of it, or at least brings people closer to its elimination. And if one lacking these qualities is absent, all the corruption we mentioned occurs, or people become closer to its occurrence. Therefore, leadership as we have explained is a divine grace (*luṭf*) in performing obligations and refraining from what is wrong, so God must not leave the accountable beings without it, and

8. See: *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 2/659-660.
9. *Al-Shifā' al-Ilāhiyyāt*, Tenth Article, Fifth Chapter: 564.

the proof for the necessity of divine grace encompasses it."[10] This reasoning, as you see, consists of two premises:

First: The appointment of the Imam is a divine grace (*lutf*) from God upon His servants.

Second: Divine grace is obligatory upon God as His wisdom requires.

As for the first premise, this is because divine grace (*lutf*) is that which brings the accountable beings closer to obedience and distances them from disobedience, even if only through preparation. It is self-evident that appointing an Imam accomplishes this through his explanation of divine knowledge and rulings, preservation of religious law from addition and subtraction, implementation of rulings, elimination of oppression and corruption, and similar functions.

As for the second premise, this is because God's abandonment of this divine grace would undermine His purpose and objective, which is the obedience of His servants and their avoidance of disobedience. Therefore, God must appoint the Imam so as not to undermine His purpose. The divine grace in his appointment is not negated by the servants' usurpation of his authority or his occultation, because God has bestowed grace upon them by appointing one who is prepared for them, but they themselves have forfeited the effect of this grace. To this al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī referred when he said:

"The Imam is divine grace, so his appointment is obligatory upon God the Most High to achieve the purpose... His existence is grace, his authority is another grace, and his absence is from us."[11]

Al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī clarified this by saying:

"The grace of the Imamate is fulfilled through several matters: Among them is what is obligatory upon God the Most High, which is creating the Imam, enabling him with authority and knowledge, and explicitly designating him by name and lineage - and God has done this. Among them is what is obligatory upon the Imam, which is assuming the Imamate and accepting it - and the Imam has done

10. *Al-Dhakhīra fī ʿIlm al-Kalām*, 410.
11. *Kashf al-Murād*, Fifth Purpose: 284.

this. And among them is what is obligatory upon the subjects, which is assisting him, supporting him, and accepting and following his commands - and the subjects have not done this. Thus the prevention of complete grace came from them, not from God the Most High nor from the Imam."[12]

The Debate of Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam with ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd

Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam - who was among the most prominent companions of Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) in theology - debated with ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd - who was among the shaykhs of the Muʿtazilites - on the issue of the Imamate, resulting in Hishām's decisive victory over ʿAmr in front of a group of his students. Here is what al-Kulaynī has narrated about this:

ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm, from his father, from al-Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm, from Yūnus ibn Yaʿqūb, who said: There was a group of his companions with Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.), among them:

Ḥumrān ibn Aʿyan, Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān, Hishām ibn Sālim, al-Ṭayyār, and a group including Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam who was young at the time. Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) said:

"O Hishām, won't you tell me what you did with ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd? And how did you question him?"

Hishām said: O son of the Messenger of God, I revere you and am shy before you, and my tongue cannot function in your presence.

Abū ʿAbd Allāh (a.s.) said: "When I command you to do something, then do it."

Hishām said: I heard about what ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd was doing and his gatherings in the mosque of Basra, and this troubled me greatly. So I went out to him and entered Basra on a Friday. I came to the mosque of Basra and found a large circle with ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd in it, wearing a black woolen cloak wrapped around his waist and another draped over his shoulders, while people were asking him questions. I asked the people to make way, and they did so. Then I sat at the back

12. Same source: 285-286.

of the group on my knees and said: O learned one, I am a stranger - would you permit me to ask a question?

He said to me: Yes.

I said to him: Do you have an eye? He said: My son, what kind of question is this? How can you ask about something you can see? I said: This is my question. He said: My son, ask, even if your question is foolish.

I said: Answer me about it.

He said to me: Ask.

I said: Do you have an eye?

He said: Yes.

I said: What do you do with it?

He said: I see colors and persons with it.

I said: Do you have a nose?

He said: Yes.

I said: What do you do with it?

He said: I smell scents with it.

I said: Do you have a mouth?

He said: Yes.

I said: What do you do with it?

He said: I taste flavors with it.

I said: Do you have an ear?

He said:

Yes. I said: What do you do with it?

He said: I hear sounds with it.

I said: Do you have a heart?

He said: Yes.

I said: What do you do with it?

He said: I distinguish with it everything that comes through these limbs and senses.

I said: Are these limbs not sufficient without the heart?

He said: No.

I said: How is that when they are sound and healthy?

He said: My son, when the limbs are in doubt about something

they smell, see, taste, or hear, they refer it to the heart, which then establishes certainty and eliminates doubt.

I said to him: So God established the heart because of the doubt of the limbs?

He said: Yes.

I said: The heart is necessary, otherwise the limbs would not achieve certainty?

He said: Yes.

I said to him: O Abū Marwān, God, the Blessed and Exalted, did not leave your limbs without appointing for them a guide (*imām*) to verify what is correct and establish certainty in matters of doubt, yet He would leave all of creation in their confusion, doubt, and disagreement, without appointing for them a guide (*imām*) to whom they can refer their doubts and confusion, while establishing for your limbs a guide to whom you refer your confusion and doubt?

He fell silent and said nothing to me... Then he drew me close and seated me in his gathering, and he did not move from his place nor speak until I got up.

Abū 'Abd Allāh (a.s.) laughed and said: "O Hishām, who taught you this?"

I said: It is something I learned from you and composed.

He (a.s.) said: "By God, this is written in the scrolls of Abraham and Moses."[13]

Perhaps his statement (a.s.) "By God, this is written..." etc., indicates that the matter of appointing a successor and guide (*imām*), which is determined by pure reason, was among the traditions of the prophets and messengers. He specifically mentioned Abraham and Moses due to their special status in this domain, and for this reason too, the Qur'an mentions what they both requested from God regarding leadership (*imāma*) and ministry (*wizāra*).[14]

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13. *Al-Kāfī*: Vol. 1, Book of Divine Proof, Chapter on the Necessity of Divine Proof, Hadith 3.

14. See: Qur'an, 2:124, and 20:30.

This is also evidenced by what has been narrated from the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) that he said:

"The Children of Israel were governed by prophets; whenever a prophet died, another prophet succeeded him. There will be no prophet after me, but there will be many successors after me."[15] The apparent meaning of this hadith is that the succession of successors (*khulafā'*) in the Islamic community is like the succession of prophets in previous nations, and it is known that succession there was by explicit designation (*tanṣīṣ*).

15. *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl* by Ibn Athīr al-Jazarī, 443 Second Chapter.

47

THE NECESSITY OF INFALLIBILITY IN THE LEADER (IMĀM)

The Sunnis have agreed that infallibility (*'iṣma*) is not among the conditions for the leader, based on their principles, since the successors after the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) were not infallible. Al-Taftāzānī said:

"Our scholars have argued against the necessity of infallibility based on the consensus regarding the leadership of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān, along with the consensus that they were not required to be infallible..."

The essence of this is a claim of consensus on the non-requirement of infallibility in the leader.[1] As for the Imami Shi'is, they are unanimous regarding this condition. Shaykh al-Mufīd said: "The Imamis are in agreement that the religious leader can only be one who is infallible from opposing God, the Most High."[2] And he said: "I say: The leaders who stand in place of the prophets in implementing rulings, establishing legal punishments, preserving religious laws, and educating mankind are infallible like the infallibility of the

1. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 5/249.
2. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, 47, Second Edition.

prophets."[3] They have then provided several proofs for the necessity of infallibility, of which we will mention some:

1. The Leader is a Guardian of Religious Law Like the Prophet (s.a.w.)

The leader must be protected from error in knowledge and action so that religious law may be preserved through him and he may guide people to God's pleasure, glory be to Him. ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī pointed to this, saying:

"The Imamis hold that the leaders are like the prophets in the necessity of their infallibility from all reprehensible acts and indecencies from childhood until death, whether intentional or unintentional, because they are the guardians of religious law and its maintainers, their condition in this being like that of the Prophet (s.a.w.)."[4] Al-Taftāzānī disputed this saying: "The appointment of the leader is up to the people (*ʿibād*) who have no way of knowing his infallibility, unlike the prophet."[5] The answer to this is clear from what has preceded regarding the invalidity of saying that appointing the leader is delegated to the people. We can reverse the argument and say: The necessity of the leader's infallibility is something that pure reason determines upon contemplating the reality of leadership and its purpose, and since people have no way of knowing the leader's infallibility as the opponent has admitted, his appointment cannot be delegated to them.

2. The Verse of Abraham's Trial (a.s.)

God said: "And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said: 'I am making you a leader for

3. Same source: 74.
4. *Dalāʾil al-Sidq*, 2/7.
5. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, 5/248.

mankind.' He said: 'And from my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant does not extend to the wrongdoers.'"[6]

The inference from this verse for our purpose depends on clarifying two matters:

First: What is meant by the leadership (*imāma*) with which God blessed His friend Abraham (a.s.)?

Second: Who are meant by the wrongdoers (*ẓālimīn*)?

As for the first: Some have said that what is meant by leadership is prophethood and messengership. This is refuted by the fact that Abraham was already a prophet before being appointed as a leader, because he requested leadership for his offspring, so he must have had a child or children at that time, or at least the prospect of having offspring. Yet the Qur'an relates that Abraham (a.s.) was astonished when the angels gave him glad tidings of a child: "He said: 'Do you give me glad tidings despite my old age? Then of what do you give me glad tidings?'"[7]

So Abraham was a prophet and messenger without having a child or offspring until old age overtook him. Then he was blessed with a child in his old age according to the explicit text of the Qur'an, where he says: "Praise be to God who has given me Ishmael and Isaac in my old age."[8]

Then he requested leadership for his offspring. Therefore, the leadership granted to Abraham must have been something other than prophethood. It appears that what is meant by it is divine leadership of society, in addition to receiving and conveying revelation. For there are three stations:

1. The station of prophethood, which is the office of receiving revelation.
2. The station of messengership, which is the office of conveying it to people.

6. Qur'an, 2:124.
7. Qur'an, 15:54.
8. Qur'an, 14:39.

3. The station of leadership, which is the office of leadership and implementing religious law in society with power and authority.

The leadership that Muslims uphold after the departure of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) is identical in reality with this leadership.

As for the second matter, namely who is meant by the wrongdoers (*ẓālimīn*), wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) in the language means putting something in other than its proper place and transgressing the limit set by religious law. Sin is putting something (an action) in other than its proper place, so sin is one of the instances of wrongdoing. God said:

"And whoever transgresses the limits of God, those are the wrongdoers."[9]

Furthermore, it is apparent from the plural form with the definite article that wrongdoing (*ẓulm*) in all its colors and forms prevents attaining this divine position. The result is that every individual among the wrongdoers is prevented from rising to the position of leadership (*imāma*), whether they were a wrongdoer for a period of their life and then repented and became not a wrongdoer, or remained in their wrongdoing. For when the wrongdoer commits wrongdoing, they are included in His saying: "My covenant does not extend to the wrongdoers." Their fitness after the removal of wrongdoing requires evidence.

Therefore, anyone who has committed wrongdoing and transgressed a limit on any day of their life, or worshipped an idol, and in general committed what is forbidden, let alone what constitutes disbelief, is not qualified for the position of leadership. This necessitates that the leader be pure from sins from the time the pen of obligation was placed upon them until the end of their life, and this is what the Imamis maintain regarding the infallibility (*'iṣma*) of the leader.

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9. Qur'an, 2:229.

What confirms what we have mentioned is that people, in relation to wrongdoing, are of four types:

1. Those who were wrongdoers throughout their life.
2. Those who were pure and clean in all periods of their life.
3. Those who were wrongdoers at the beginning of their life, and repentant at its end.
4. The opposite of the third.

Far be it from Abraham (a.s.) to ask for leadership for the first and fourth types among his offspring, and He has explicitly stated that His covenant does not extend to the wrongdoer, and this applies only to the third type. When this type is excluded, only the second type remains, which is what is sought.[10]

3. The Verse of Obedience to Those in Authority

God said: "Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you."[11]

Indeed, He the Exalted has commanded obedience to those in authority (*ulī l-amr*) in absolute terms, without any qualification. It is self-evident that He does not approve of disbelief and disobedience for His servants, even if it comes through obedience to another person. Therefore, obeying those in authority when they command disobedience is forbidden.

The reconciliation between these two matters necessitates that those in authority, whose obedience is absolutely obligatory, must be infallible and never commit any disobedience whatsoever. Thus, from the absolute command of obedience, we can discover that the subject must possess characteristics that prevent them from commanding anything other than obedience.

Moreover, "those in authority" is conjoined to "the Messenger"

10. See: *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, 1/274.
11. Qur'an, 4:59.

without repeating the verb "obey," which indicates that the criterion for obeying the Messenger and those in authority is the same. Just as the obligation to obey the Messenger (s.a.w.) is absolute and stems from his infallibility, so too the obligation to obey those in authority is absolute and stems from their infallibility.

Among those who explicitly stated that this verse indicates the infallibility of those in authority is Imam al-Rāzī in his exegesis. However, he did not follow through with the logical conclusion of his reasoning, instead qualifying it by saying that we are unable to identify and reach the infallible leader and obtain religious knowledge from him, so there is no alternative but to understand it as referring to the people of authority (*ahl al-ḥall wa-l-ʿaqd*).[12] This can be critiqued: if the verse indicates the infallibility of those in authority, then we must identify them, and claiming inability is an evasion of the truth. Does this inability apply only to his time, or did it also apply at the time of the verse's revelation? The second option is definitely false, for it is inconceivable that divine revelation would command obedience to the infallible one and then not identify him at the time of revelation. By identifying him at the time of revelation, the infallible one becomes known in later times, one link after another.

Furthermore, interpreting "those in authority" as the people of authority is an explanation using something even more ambiguous. Does it refer to military officers and commanders, or scholars and traditionists, or rulers and politicians, or all of them? And have they ever unanimously agreed on anything without opposition from a group of Muslims?!

There are other texts from the Qur'an and Sunna that indicate the infallibility of the Prophet's household and family, such as the verse of purification (*āyat al-taṭhīr*) and the hadith of the two weighty things (*ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*) and others, which we have left out for the

12. *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 10/144.

sake of brevity.[13] What was presented in the first chapter is relevant here, so please refer back to it.

13. See: *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 2/627-631 and 607-611.

48

RELIGIOUS TEXTS AND THE APPOINTMENT OF ALI (A.S.) TO THE IMAMATE

Through our previous discussions in light of the Qur'an and Sunna, through studying Islamic history and examining social and political matters, and under the guidance of clear reason, it has become evident that the Prophet's successor (s.a.w.) and the leader of the Muslims must be appointed by the Messenger with God's permission. Therefore, we must turn to the Qur'an and Sunna to identify this appointed leader.

We say: Anyone who has studied the Prophet's biography (s.a.w.) finds Ali ibn Abi Talib to be the Messenger of God's minister in his affairs, his designated successor, and the one in authority after him. Those who have examined the Prophet's words and actions in his settlements and travels find his statements about this to be widely transmitted (*mutawātira*). There are also verses from the noble Book that guide us to this, and in this context, we will suffice with mentioning the verse of authority (*āyat al-wilāya*) from the Qur'an, followed by the hadith of status (*ḥadīth al-manzila*) and the hadith of Ghadīr (*ḥadīth al-ghadīr*):

The Verse of Authority

The Exalted said: "Your guardian is only God and His Messenger and those who believe, who establish prayer and give charity while they bow."[1]

Before presenting evidence from this verse, we will mention the circumstances of its revelation. The exegetes have narrated from Anas ibn Mālik and others that a beggar came to the mosque saying: "Who will lend to the Wealthy and Faithful?" Ali was bowing in prayer and gestured to the beggar: "Remove the ring from my finger." No one had left the mosque before Gabriel descended with: "Your guardian is only God...".[2] Here is the explanation of the evidence:

What can be understood from the verse is that there are three guardians: God the Exalted, His Messenger, and the believers described with three attributes. Those believers who do not possess these attributes are under guardianship. This can only be realized by explaining guardian (*walī*) as leader and administrator of the affairs of those under guardianship, since this type of authority requires specific evidence and faith alone is not sufficient to establish it. This differs from the guardianship of love and support, as these are branches of faith - every believer loves and supports their fellow believer. This is in addition to the exclusivity derived from the word "only" (*innamā*) and the traditions about the circumstances of revelation concerning Imam Ali (a.s.). These three aspects make the verse like an explicit text indicating what the Imamis believe regarding the issue of the Imamate.

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1. Qur'an, 5:55

2. Narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr*: 6/186; and al-Jaṣṣāṣ in *Aḥkām al-Qur'an*: 2/446; and al-Suyūṭī in *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*: 2/293; and others. And Ḥassān ibn Thābit composed his well-known verses about this, which are: "O Abū Ḥasan, may my soul and heart be sacrificed for you, and all who are quick and slow in guidance / Will my praise and that of those who love go to waste? But praise for the sake of God is never wasted / You are the one who gave while bowing in prayer, may the souls of people be sacrificed for you, O best of those who bow / With your blessed ring, O best master, and O best buyer and then O best seller / So God revealed about you the best guardianship and made it clear in the definitive laws"

If you ask: If "those who believe" refers to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), why was the plural form used?

The answer is: The plural form was used to encourage people to emulate his action so they might receive similar reward, and to indicate that the nature of believers should reach this level of eagerness for righteousness, benevolence, and attending to the poor - even if they face an urgent matter while praying, they should not delay it until finishing prayer.[3] There is another explanation mentioned by Shaykh al-Ṭabrisī, which is that using the plural form for the Commander of the Faithful was for glorification and veneration, as speakers of the language use plural forms for individuals as a sign of respect, which is too well-known in their speech to require proof.[4]

It might be said: "The intended meaning of guardian (*walī*) in the verse is not administrator, but rather supporter and friend, as evidenced by what comes before and after it, where God forbade believers from taking Jews and Christians as guardians (*awliyā'*), meaning only support and friendship. If it were interpreted as administrator in this verse, it would require inconsistency."[5]

The answer to this is: Context is only evidence when there is no proof to the contrary, because in such cases we cannot be certain that the verse was revealed in that context, since the arrangement of the noble book in its compilation does not match its arrangement in revelation by consensus of the community (*umma*). In revelation, there are many verses that differ from what the context would suggest, such as the verse of purification which appears in the context of women, despite the existence of explicit text establishing that it specifically refers to the five people of the cloak (*ahl al-kisā'*).[6]

The Hadith of "Status" (*manzila*)

The historians and biographers have narrated that when the

3. *Al-Kashshāf*: 1/649
4. *Majma' al-Bayān*: 3-4/211
5. The objection by al-Rāzī in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*: 12/28
6. *Al-Murāja'āt*: 167, No. 44

Messenger of God (s.a.w.) set out for Tabūk, he appointed ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) as his successor over his family in Medina. The hypocrites spread rumors about him, saying that he had only left him behind because he found him burdensome and feared him. This troubled ʿAlī, so he took up his weapons, went to the Prophet, and informed him of their words. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "They have lied. Rather, I appointed you as my successor over what I left behind. So return and be my successor among my family and yours. O ʿAlī, are you not satisfied to be to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me?"[7]

The addition of the word "status" (*manzila*) - which is a generic noun - to Aaron necessitates generality. Thus, the narration indicates that every station and position that was established for Aaron is established for ʿAlī, except what was excluded, which is prophethood. In fact, the exception is also evidence of generality, for without it there would be no reason for the exception. The fact that the specific occasion concerned succession over family does not indicate exclusivity, because the specific occasion does not restrict the general meaning. This is like if you saw someone in a state of ritual impurity touching the Verse of the Throne and said to them "No one in a state of ritual impurity should touch the verses of the Qur'an," this would be evidence for the general prohibition of touching the Qur'an while in a state of ritual impurity.

As for Aaron's status with Moses, it is sufficient to cite God's words narrating Moses's speech: "And appoint for me a minister from my

7. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* by Ibn Hishām: 2/519-520. It was also narrated by the authors of the Ṣaḥīḥs: al-Bukhārī in *Ghazwat Tabūk*: 6/3; and Muslim in *Faḍā'il ʿAlī*: 7/120; and Ibn Mājah in *Faḍā'il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī*: 1/55; and Imam Aḥmad in various places in his *Musnad*, see: 1/173, 175, 177, 179, 182, 185, 230. It was narrated by all who discussed the Battle of Tabūk among the traditionists and historians, and quoted by all who wrote biographies of ʿAlī among the biographical lexicographers, both early and late, despite their different approaches and schools of thought. It is among the accepted traditions in every generation of this community. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr said: "It is among the most established and authentic traditions." In summary, the Tradition of Status is undoubtedly established by consensus of Muslims across their different schools and approaches. See: *Al-Murāja'āt*, Conference 28.

family, Aaron, my brother. Strengthen my back through him, and let him share my task."[8]

Moses was granted all of this, as God says: "He said: You have been granted your request, O Moses."[9]

Moses appointed his brother Aaron as his successor when he went to his Lord's appointed time with a group of his people. God says: "And Moses said to his brother Aaron: Be my successor among my people, and put things right and do not follow the way of those who spread corruption."[10]

Although this succession occurred in a specific situation and time, the wording is absolute and the specific occasion does not restrict it. Hence, if Moses had been absent from his people on another occasion without explicitly appointing Aaron as successor, Aaron would have undoubtedly been his successor. Although Aaron was Moses's partner in prophethood, leadership was exclusive to Moses, as Moses had authority over Aaron and others.

The Hadith of "Ghadīr"

The hadith of Ghadīr is among the most continuously transmitted prophetic traditions, with unbroken chains of transmission from the time of the Companions and their Successors to the present day. It was narrated by 110 Companions and 84 Successors, and scholars and hadith experts have transmitted it throughout successive centuries. The authors who have written about Ghadīr have spared us the need to demonstrate its sources and references. Sufficient for this purpose are the books of a large group of notable scholars of the sect, including: the scholar Sayyid Hāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107 AH/1696 CE), author of *Ghāyat al-Marām*, Sayyid Mīr Ḥāmid Ḥusayn al-Hindī (d. 1306 AH/1889 CE), author of *al-ʿAbaqāt*, Scholar al-Amīnī (d. 1390

8. Qur'an, 20:29-32
9. Qur'an, 20:36
10. Qur'an, 7:142

AH/1970 CE), author of *al-Ghadīr*, and Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1381 AH/1962 CE), author of *al-Murāja ʿāt*.

The summary of the hadith is that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) announced to the people to set out for pilgrimage in the tenth year after the migration, and it is said that at least ninety thousand people went out with him. When he had completed his rituals and was returning to Medina, he reached Ghadīr Khumm on Thursday, the eighteenth of Dhū l-Ḥijja. The trustworthy Gabriel descended with God's words:

"O Messenger, convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord."

The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) ordered those who had gone ahead to return and those who were behind to wait. When the people had taken their places, the call for the noon prayer was made. He led the people in prayer, then stood to address them in the middle of the crowd upon the saddles of the camels. After praising and glorifying God, and taking the acknowledgment from those present of Divine unity, prophethood, and resurrection, and advising about the two weighty things (*thaqalayn*), and explaining that the Messenger (s.a.w.) had more authority over the believers than they had over themselves, he took ʿAlī's hand and raised it until the whiteness of both their armpits was visible and all the people recognized him. Then he said:

"Whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), then ʿAlī is his master" - saying it three times.

Then he prayed for those who supported him and against those who opposed him, and said: "Let those present inform those absent."

They had not yet dispersed when the trustworthy bearer of divine revelation descended with His words: "Today I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you." [The verse]

Then the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: "God is greatest for the perfection of religion and completion of favor, and the Lord's satisfaction with my message and the guardianship (*wilāya*) of ʿAlī after me."

Then people began congratulating ʿAlī, and among the first of the Companions to congratulate him were the two elders Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, each saying: "Congratulations, congratulations to you, O son

of Abū Ṭālib, you have become my master (*mawlā*) and the master of every believing man and woman."

The Significance of the Hadith

The word "master" (*mawlā*) has been used with different meanings or applications, including: owner, slave, emancipator, emancipated, companion, neighbor, ally, son, uncle, cousin, guest, partner, nephew (sister's son), lord, supporter, benefactor, beneficiary, friend, follower, in-law, and one who has priority over something. The meaning that has become a point of contention between Shi'i and Sunni Muslims concerns whether it means "friend" or "one who has priority." The Sunnis say that the intended meaning of *mawlā* in the Ghadīr hadith is love and friendship, while the Shi'is say that it means one who has priority in managing the affairs of the believers, which is the meaning of leadership (*imāma*). They support this with contextual and verbal evidence that makes the hadith effectively explicit in showing that the intended meaning of *mawlā* is having priority in managing believers' affairs, similar to the guardianship (*wilāya*) that the Prophet (s.a.w.) possessed.

As for the contextual evidence, the obligation of faithful love is a general matter that encompasses all believing men and women, and this is clear to every Muslim without needing explanation or emphasis in such a critical situation during travel, in the intense midday heat, when people were exhausted from the journey's hardship and the scorching sun, to the point where some would place one end of their cloak under their feet and the other over their head. There, the Prophet (s.a.w.) ascended the pulpit of the howdahs to announce to them what was already obvious. This contrasts with guardianship in the sense of having priority in managing Muslims' affairs, since the default is that no one has such authority over others. Additionally, there were many motives and desires involved, so appointing someone to manage Muslim affairs after the Prophet (s.a.w.) in such a great gathering was a requirement of wisdom and benefit.

As for the verbal evidence, there are multiple indicators, of which we will point out some:

The first indicator: The beginning of the hadith, which is his (s.a.w.) statement: "Do I not have more right over you than yourselves?" or similar expressions with close meanings, followed by his statement: "So whoever I am his master (*mawlā*), Ali is his master (*mawlā*)." This opening has been narrated by more than sixty-four Sunni scholars and memorizers of hadith.[11]

The second indicator: The Prophet's announcement of his own passing to the people, expressing that he would soon depart from among them, leaving an enormous void that would be filled by appointing Ali (a.s.) to the position of guardianship (*wilāya*). There are other indicators that our meticulous scholar has thoroughly investigated in his work on Ghadīr[12], along with additional contextual evidence surrounding the Ghadīr hadith.[13]

Why Did the Companions Disregard the Meaning of the Ghadīr Hadith?

The strongest argument for those who wish to avoid accepting the explicit text of Ghadīr and similar traditions is this: if the matter was as claimed, why didn't the Companions take it as their criterion after the Prophet? It is not correct that the Companions and the majority of the community would unanimously reject what the Prophet had conveyed in that great gathering.

The answer is that anyone who examines the history of the Companions will find many similar instances in their political lives, and the abandonment of the Ghadīr hadith and other texts regarding leadership (*imāma*) can be considered among these cases. These

11. See their statements in *Kitāb al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, distributed according to their centuries.

12. Previous source: 370-383.

13. See: *Al-Ilāhiyyāt 'alā Hudā al-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna wa-l-'Aql*: 2/598-599 and *Al-Ghadīr* by al-'Allāma al-Amīnī: 1/651-666. The latter mentioned twenty connected and disconnected contextual evidences for this.

include "the calamity of Thursday" narrated by the two shaykhs and others[14], "the expedition of Usāma"[15], and "the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya" and the objection of a group of Companions.[16] We are not attempting to enumerate all the instances where the group opposed the Prophet's texts and teachings, as the violations are not limited to what we mentioned but exceed seventy cases, as documented by some scholars.[17] In light of this, the majority of the Companions' abandonment of the Ghadīr hadith does not indicate either its lack of continuous transmission or the incompleteness of its meaning.

14. Reported by al-Bukhārī in multiple places, see: 1/3 chapter on Writing Knowledge, hadith 3, and 4/70 and 6/10 from the edition printed in 1314 AH; and Imam Aḥmad in his *Musnad*: 1/355.

15. *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*: 2/189-192; *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* by al-Shahristānī: 1/23.

16. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 2/81, Book of Conditions; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 5/175, Chapter on the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya; and *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Ibn Sa'd: 2/114.

17. See: *Al-Naṣṣ wa-l-Ijtihād* by al-Sayyid al-Imām Sharaf al-Dīn.

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THE PROPHETIC TRADITION AND THE TWELVE IMAMS: THE HADITH OF THE TWELVE CALIPHS

The Noble Prophet (s.a.w.) did not limit himself to appointing Ali (a.s.) to the position of leadership (*imāma*) and caliphate (*khilāfa*). Nor did he suffice with directing the Islamic community to his household and pure family members. He did not stop at comparing them to Noah's ark. Rather, he proceeded to specify the number of Imams who would assume the caliphate after him, one after another, so that no doubter would remain in doubt. It has been narrated in the authentic collections and chains of transmission through various paths from Jābir ibn Samura that the caliphs after the Prophet would be twelve caliphs, all from Quraysh. Here are the characteristics mentioned about them:

1. The religion will remain mighty and impregnable until twelve caliphs;
2. Islam will remain mighty until twelve caliphs;
3. The religion will remain established until the Hour comes, or until twelve caliphs rule over you;
4. The religion will remain manifest over those who oppose it until twelve caliphs from my community pass;

5. This matter will remain sound until there are twelve commanders (*amīr*);
6. People will remain in a good state until twelve caliphs.[1]

The commentators of hadith have differed in identifying these Imams, and you will not find among their words anything that heals the sick or quenches the thirst, except what Shaykh Sulaymān al-Balkhī al-Qandūzī al-Ḥanafī transmitted in his *Yanābī'* from some scholars, who said:

> The hadiths indicating that there would be twelve caliphs after him have been transmitted through many chains. This hadith cannot be applied to the caliphs from among the Companions after him, as they were fewer than twelve. Nor can it be applied to the Umayyad kings, as they exceeded twelve and were grossly unjust, except for ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz... Nor can it be applied to the Abbasid kings, as they exceeded the mentioned number and paid little regard to God's words: "Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it except love for my near relatives."
>
> And the hadith of the cloak (*ḥadīth al-kisā'*). Therefore, it must be applied to the twelve Imams from his household and family, for they were the most knowledgeable people of their time, the most illustrious, the most pious, the most God-fearing, the highest in lineage, the most excellent in nobility, and the most honored before God. Their knowledge came from their fathers in an unbroken chain to their grandfather (s.a.w.) and through divine inheritance (*wirātha laduniyya*). This is how they were known to the people of knowledge and verification, and the people of spiritual unveiling and divine success.
>
> This meaning is supported and strengthened by the hadith of the

1. Refer to: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 9/81, Chapter on Succession; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 6/3, Book of Leadership, Chapter on People Following Quraysh; *Musnad Aḥmad*: 5/86-108; *Mustadrak al-Ḥākim*: 3/618.

Two Weighty Things (*ḥadīth al-thaqalayn*) and the numerous hadiths mentioned in this book and elsewhere.[2]

I say: If a free person, unburdened by any preconceptions, were to carefully examine these hadiths and the history of the twelve Imams from the Prophet's lineage, they would realize that these hadiths refer to none other than them. For some of these hadiths indicate that Islam will not perish or end until twelve caliphs from Quraysh pass among the Muslims. Some indicate that Islam's might will last until twelve caliphs, and others indicate that the religion will remain established until the Hour comes and until twelve caliphs appear, among other descriptions.

These characteristics are not found in the Islamic community except in the twelve Imams who are well-known to both groups[3], especially what indicates that the presence of the Imams continues until the end of time. It is known that the last of the Imams is the awaited Mahdi, whose appearance is considered one of the signs of the Hour.

The Hadith of the Two Weighty Things

Among the texts establishing the leadership (*imāma*) of the pure family is the hadith of the Two Weighty Things, which is mutually transmitted (*mutawātir*) by both groups. The Prophet (s.a.w.) linked them with the clear verses of the Qur'an and made them exemplars for people of understanding, saying:

"I am leaving among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray: the Book of God and my family, my household. These two will never separate until they return to me at the Pool."

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2. *Yanābī' al-Mawadda*: 446, Istanbul edition, year 1302.

3. They are: Ali ibn Abi Talib, and his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn the masters of the youth of Paradise, Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjad, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Baqir, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Taqi, Ali ibn Muhammad al-Naqi, al-Hasan ibn Ali al-'Askari, and the proof of the age al-Mahdi al-Muntazar (a.s.).

The community must hold fast to the pure family just as they must hold fast to the Glorious Book. Just as it is not permissible to follow a book that contradicts God's Book in its ruling, it is not permissible to follow a leader who contradicts the Imams of the pure family in his ruling. Anyone who reflects on this hadith will find that it aims to restrict the caliphate to the Imams of the pure family.

The texts establishing the designation of each subsequent Imam by the preceding Imam have been transmitted abundantly. Whoever wishes to examine these texts should refer to the books written on this subject.[4]

4. See: *Al-Kāfī*, 1, Book of Proof; *Kifāyat al-Athar* by Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Khazzaz al-Qummi from the scholars of the fourth century; *Ithbāt al-Hudāt* by al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-'Amili, which is the most comprehensive book on this subject.

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THE TWELFTH IMAM IN THE QUR'AN AND TRADITION

An extensive discussion of introducing the Imams of the Prophet's household (a.s.) by explaining their knowledge, virtues, and the results of their efforts in religious sciences, their role in educating distinguished personalities in knowledge and practice, and the persecution they faced from the caliphs of their time would require a large encyclopedia. For this reason, we have condensed our discussion of these matters. However, since belief in the awaited Imam is a fundamental principle of Shi'i doctrine concerning leadership (*imāma*), and belief in him is generally shared among Muslim groups, we prefer to shed light on this principle in summary, saying:

Anyone familiar with hadith will recognize the mutual transmission of glad tidings from the Prophet, his family, and his companions about the appearance of the Mahdi in the end times to eliminate ignorance and oppression, spread knowledge, establish justice, and make the religion prevail completely even if the polytheists dislike it. The content of the saying of the greatest Messenger (s.a.w.) has been abundantly transmitted:

"If only one day remained in the world, God would extend that

day until a man from my descendants emerges, and he will fill it with justice and equity just as it was filled with injustice and oppression."[1]

If there is any disagreement among Muslim groups, it concerns his birth. The majority of Sunnis say that he will be born in the end times, but the Shi'i belief, based on numerous traditions, is that he was born in Surra Man Ra'ā (*Sāmarrā'*) in the year 255 after the Prophet's migration, and went into occultation by God's command in the year of his father's death in 260 AH/874 CE, and God will make him appear to establish his justice.

We will suffice here with mentioning an index of traditions that have been narrated by both Sunnis and Shi'is:

1. Glad tidings of his appearance: 657 traditions
2. That he is from the household of the noble Prophet (s.a.w.): 389 traditions
3. That he is from the children of Imam ʿAlī (a.s.): 214 traditions
4. That he is from the children of Fāṭima al-Zahrā' (a.s.): 192 traditions
5. That he is the ninth from the children of al-Ḥusayn (a.s.): 148 traditions
6. That he is from the children of Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (a.s.): 185 traditions
7. That he is from the children of al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (a.s.): 146 traditions
8. That he will fill the earth with justice and equity: 132 traditions
9. That he will have a long occultation (*ghayba*): 91 traditions
10. That he will live a long life: 318 traditions
11. That he is the twelfth Imam from the Imams of the Prophet's household (a.s.): 136 traditions
12. That Islam will encompass the entire world after his appearance: 27 traditions

1. See: *Musnad Aḥmad*: 1/99 and 3/17 and 70.

13. Traditions concerning his birth: 214 traditions[2]

Only Ibn Khaldūn in his *Muqaddima* has questioned the authenticity traditions about Imam al-Mahdī wholesale, and Professor Aḥmad Muḥammad Ṣiddīq has refuted his argument in a treatise titled *Ibrāz al-Wahm al-Maknūn min Kalām Ibn Khaldūn*.[3]

A Sunni scholar said in response to Ibn Khaldūn's claims:

> The issue is not about one or two traditions, or one or two narrations. It is about a collection of traditions and reports that number approximately eighty, which hundreds of narrators and more have collectively transmitted, including authors of authentic books. So why should we reject all of this quantity? Are they all corrupt?! If this judgment were correct, the religion would collapse - God forbid - as a result of doubt and corrupt suspicion extending to other aspects of the tradition of the Messenger of God (s.a.w.).
>
> Furthermore, I find no disagreement about the appearance of al-Mahdī, or about the world's need for him. The disagreement is about who he is - from al-Ḥasan's lineage or al-Ḥusayn's? Will he come in the end times, or does he exist now? The false claimants are of no consequence and have no credibility.
>
> If we look at the appearance of al-Mahdī objectively, we find no difficulty in accepting and believing it, or at least not rejecting it.
>
> This may be supported by numerous proofs and multiple traditions, narrated by trustworthy Muslims, and transmitted to us

2. Many Sunni scholars have authored books about Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.), including al-Hafiz Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani who wrote *Ṣifat al-Mahdī*, al-Kanji al-Shafi'i who wrote *Al-Bayān fī Akhbār Ṣāḥib al-Zamān*, Mulla Ali al-Muttaqi who wrote *Al-Burhān fī 'Alāmāt Mahdī Ākhir al-Zamān*, 'Abbad ibn Ya'qub al-Rawajini who wrote *Akhbār al-Mahdī*, al-Suyuti who wrote *Al-'Urf al-Wardī fī Akhbār al-Mahdī*, Ibn Hajar who wrote *Al-Qawl al-Mukhtaṣar fī 'Alāmāt al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar*, and Shaykh Jamal al-Din al-Dimashqi who wrote *'Aqd al-Ward fī Akhbār al-Imām al-Muntaẓar*, and many others both ancient and modern.

3. Recently, a person called Ahmad al-Misri published a treatise titled "Al-Mahdi wa-l-Mahdawiyya" in which he claimed to refute the hadiths about al-Mahdi, and denied those numerous hadiths that exceed the level of successive transmission (*tawātur*), due to his ignorance of the Sunna and hadith.

through valuable books. Al-Tirmidhī is among those who authenticated and judged traditions. Additionally, the traditions about al-Mahdī have supporting evidence in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, such as Jābir's tradition in Muslim which states:

"Their leader will say (to Jesus), 'Come, lead us in prayer.'"[4] And Abū Hurayra's tradition in al-Bukhārī which states: "How will you be when the son of Mary descends among you while your leader is from among you?"[5] There is nothing to prevent this leader and this Imam from being al-Mahdī.

Furthermore, many of the predecessors, may God be pleased with them, did not oppose this view. Rather, their explanations and statements confirmed this belief among Muslims.[6]

Questions About the Awaited al-Mahdī (a.j.)

The assertion that Imam al-Mahdī has remained alive since his birth until now, and that he is in occultation (*ghayba*) and will appear by God's command, has raised questions about his life and leadership (*imāma*), the most important of which are the following:

1. How can he be an Imam while he is in occultation?
2. Why did he go into occultation?
3. How can a person live for such a long time?
4. When will he appear? And what are the signs of his appearance?

The scholarly investigators among Shi'i scholars have answered these questions in independent works, and there is no room here to convey even a fraction of what they have written. We will suffice here with discussing these matters in summary form, and we refer those who want more detail to the sources written in this field. We say:

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4. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 1/95, Chapter on the Descent of Jesus.
5. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 4/168, Chapter on the Descent of Jesus son of Mary.
6. Dr. Abd al-Baqi, *Bayna Yaday al-Sā'a*: 123-125.

How can he be an Imam while he is in occultation?

The purpose of appointing an Imam is to carry out the functions of leadership (*imāma*) and guidance, which depends on his being visible among the members of the community and observable to them. So how can he be an Imam and leader while he is hidden from them?

The answer to this comes in several aspects:

First: Our lack of knowledge about the benefit of his existence during his occultation does not indicate its absence. One of the greatest follies in analyzing scientific or religious issues is to treat the absence of knowledge as knowledge of absence. There is no doubt that human intellects cannot comprehend many important matters in the realm of creation and divine law. Indeed, we do not understand the wisdom behind many of God's established ways, but the requirement of His actions being free from futility and purposelessness necessitates submission to divine law when it reaches us through authentic means. You have already learned about the multiple transmitted reports concerning his occultation.

Second: Occultation does not necessarily entail complete absence of involvement in affairs. Consider the companion of Moses, who was one of God's saints (*awliyā'*) to whom the greatest prophet of God in his time turned, as the Qur'an relates: "Then they found one of Our servants to whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Our presence. Moses said to him: 'May I follow you so that you teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?'"[7]

What, then, prevents the hidden Imam from having similar involvement each day and night? This is supported by traditions indicating that he attends the pilgrimage season during the months of Hajj, performs pilgrimage, accompanies people, and attends gatherings.

Third: What is certain is that the general public cannot reach him during his occultation. However, it is not certain that the elite cannot

7. Qur'an, 18:65-66.

reach him. Rather, traditions indicate the opposite - the righteous ones of the community, through whom rain clouds are made to yield their bounty, have the honor of meeting him and benefiting from the light of his presence. Consequently, the community benefits from him through their intermediation. There are numerous accounts from the saints (*awliyā'*) about this.

Fourth: The Imam's management of external affairs and matters of governance is not limited to his personal and physical presence. Rather, he can delegate others to manage affairs, as Imam al-Mahdī (may our souls be sacrificed for him) did during his occultation. During the Minor Occultation (260-329 AH/941 CE), he had four deputies who attended to people's needs, and communication between him and the people continued through them. During the Major Occultation, he appointed just and knowledgeable jurists and scholars who knew the religious laws to handle judiciary matters, implement policies, enforce legal punishments, and made them his proof over the people, as stated in his noble directive: "As for occurring events, refer to the narrators of our traditions, for they are my proof over you, and I am God's proof over them."[8] The Imam al-Mahdī (a.s.) referred to these answers in his final directive to some of his deputies, saying:

"As for the manner of benefiting from me during my occultation, it is like benefiting from the sun when clouds hide it from sight."

Why Did al-Mahdī (a.s.) Go into Occultation?

The Imam's presence among people would yield benefits that are not available during the time of occultation, so why did he go into hiding from people, depriving them of the benefits of his presence? And what was the benefit that concealed him from people's sight?

The answer to this can be addressed through both refutation and resolution:

As for refutation, it is what we mentioned in answering the first

8. *Kamāl al-Dīn* by al-Saduq: 485, Chapter 45, Hadith 4.

question - our minds' inability to comprehend the reasons for his occultation should not lead us to deny the abundant traditions. Acknowledging our limited understanding is more appropriate than rejecting widely transmitted traditions; indeed, it is necessary.

As for resolution, the reasons for his occultation are clear to those who carefully examine the traditions concerning it. Imam al-Mahdī (a.s.) is the last of the twelve Imams whom the Prophet promised and with whom he connected Islam's honor. It is known that Islamic governments did not respect them, but rather lay in wait for them, throwing them in prisons and spilling their pure blood through sword or poison. Had he been visible, they would have attempted to kill him to extinguish his light. Therefore, wisdom required that he remain hidden from people's sight - he sees them and they see him, but they do not recognize him - until God's will requires his appearance, after the world develops a special readiness to accept him and unite under his banner of obedience, so that God may fulfill through him what He promised to all nations regarding the inheritance of earth by the oppressed.

Some traditions point to this wisdom. Zurāra narrated: "I heard Abū Ja'far (al-Bāqir) (a.s.) say: 'The Qā'im will have an occultation before his rising.' I asked: 'Why?' He said: 'He fears.' Zurāra said: 'He means being killed.' In another narration: 'He fears being slaughtered.'"[9]

Imam al-Mahdī (a.s.) and His Long Life

Among the questions raised about Imam al-Mahdī is the length of his life during his occultation. He was born in 255 AH/869 CE, making his age in present times more than 1,150 years. Is it scientifically possible for a person to live this long?

The answer comes from two aspects, through refutation and resolution.

As for refutation, the Qur'an indicates that the elder of the

9. See: *Kamāl al-Dīn*: 281, Chapter 44, Hadiths 8, 9, and 10.

prophets lived nearly a thousand years. God says: "And he remained among them for a thousand years less fifty years."[10]

The Torah contains the names of many long-lived individuals and mentions their circumstances in the Book of Genesis.[11] Muslims have authored books about long-lived people, such as the book *al-Mu'ammarīn* by Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī. Al-Ṣadūq also mentioned several of them in his book *Kamāl al-Dīn*[12], as did al-'Allāma al-Karājakī in his specific treatise titled *al-Burhān 'alā Ṣiḥḥat Ṭūl 'Umr al-Imām Ṣāḥib al-Zamān* (a.s.)[13], and al-'Allāma al-Majlisī in *al-Biḥār*[14], among others.

As for resolution, questioning the possibility of longevity reveals a lack of recognition of God's vast power: "They have not valued God with His true worth."[15]

If his life, occultation, and all his affairs are under God's care, what difficulty is there in God extending his life as He wishes, protecting him from illness, and granting him a life of comfort?

In other words, a long life is either inherently possible or impossible. No one claims the latter, so the former must be true. Therefore, there is nothing preventing God from extending the life of His guardian to fulfill one of the purposes of divine law.

Furthermore, modern science has established that human longevity is possible when health rules are observed, and that death at a young age is not due to an inherent limitation, but rather to external factors that prevent life's continuation. If humans could be protected from these through specific medicines and treatments, their lives could be extended as long as God wills.

There are extensive statements from medical experts about

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10. Qur'an, 29:14.
11. Torah, Book of Genesis, Chapter Five, Verse 5, where the ages of Adam, Seth, Noah and others are mentioned.
12. *Kamāl al-Dīn*: 555.
13. *Al-Burhān 'alā Ṣiḥḥat Ṭūl 'Umr al-Imām Ṣāḥib al-Zamān*, appended to *Kanz al-Fawā'id*, volume two, see the section on long-lived people: 114-115.
14. *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 51/225-293.
15. Qur'an, 6:91.

the possibility of extending life and prolonging human existence, published in various scientific books and journals.[16]

When you read what doctors write in this field, the meaning of God's words becomes clear: "Had he not been among those who glorify God, he would have remained in its belly until the Day of Resurrection."[17]

If human life in the bellies of whales, in the depths of the oceans, is possible until the Day of Resurrection, then how could a person not live on land, in natural conditions, under God's care and protection, for as long as He wills?!

What are the signs of the appearance of the Mahdī?

If the hidden Imam is to appear after a long occultation, then there must be signs and portents that herald his appearance. What are these signs?

Answer: The events that are mentioned in the books of hadith as occurring before the appearance of the awaited Mahdī consist of several matters, including:

1. The call from heaven, where a caller from heaven will call out the name of al-Mahdī and those in the East and West will hear it, and the caller is Gabriel, the Trustworthy Spirit.[18]
2. The lunar and solar eclipses occurring at unusual times, with the solar eclipse in the middle of Ramadan and the lunar eclipse at its end, contrary to the normal pattern.[19]
3. Discord and hypocrisy in society.
4. The spread of oppression, injustice, and chaos in the community (*umma*).
5. The affliction of people with red and white death (*mawt*).

16. See: *Majallat al-Muqtaṭaf*, volume three from the fifty-ninth year.
17. Qur'an, 37:143-144.
18. *Al-Mahdī*: 195.
19. Same source: 196, 305.

As for the red death, it is by the sword, and as for the white death, it is by plague.[20]

6. The killing of the pure soul (*nafs zakiyya*), from among the children of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w.).
7. The emergence of the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*).
8. The emergence of al-Sufyānī, who is ʿUthmān ibn ʿAnbasa from the descendants of Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya.

And other matters that are mentioned in Islamic hadiths.[21] These are the signs of his appearance, but there are matters that pave the way for his appearance and facilitate the achievement of his goals. We point to the most prominent of these:

1. Global readiness: This means that human society - due to the prevalence of corruption - reaches a point where it despairs of achieving reform by human hands and through international organizations that carry various titles, and that the pressure of oppression and tyranny on humanity leads it to acknowledge and admit that reform can only be achieved through divine miracle and the presence of a supernatural force that destroys all those corrupt human blocs that have bound human necks with their wires.
2. The advancement of technology: The unified global government can only be achieved through the perfection of human technology, such that the entire world can hear his voice and call, and his teachings and laws in one day and one time. Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Indeed the believer in the time of al-Qā'im, while in the East, will see his brother who is in the West, and likewise the one in the West will see his brother who is in the East."[22]

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20. Same source: 198.
21. See regarding these signs: *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 52/181-308, chapter 25; *Kitāb al-Mahdī* by Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr; and *Muntakhab al-Athar* by Luṭf Allāh al-Ṣāfī: 424-462.
22. *Muntakhab al-Athar*: 483.

1. A global revolutionary movement: Although the government of Imam al-Mahdī (a.s.) is based on the perfection of minds, the government cannot do without a revolutionary movement that paves the way for the Imam (a.s.) and accompanies him after his appearance until the achievement of his intended goals and objectives.

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THE RETURN (AL-RAJʿA)

The Return (*al-Raj'a*) linguistically means "coming back," and in technical usage refers to the return to life of a group of deceased people after the global uprising of Imam al-Mahdī (a.s.). This is one of the beliefs of the Imami Shi'a based on numerous - indeed mass-transmitted - hadiths narrated from the Imams of the Household (a.s.) regarding this matter. On this topic, Shaykh al-Mufīd says:

"Indeed God Most High will bring back to life a group from the community of Muhammad (s.a.w.) after their death and before the Day of Resurrection, and this is a doctrine specific to the family of Muhammad (s.a.w.)."[1] And al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā said:

"Know that what the Imami Shi'a believe is that after the appearance of the Imam of the Time, al-Mahdī (a.s.), God Most High will bring back some of his deceased followers so they may attain the reward of supporting and assisting him and witnessing his government, and He will also bring back some of his enemies to take revenge upon them, so they may taste what they witness of the

1. *Muṣannafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*: 7/32, *Al-Masā'il al-Sarawiyya*.

triumph of truth and the elevation of the word of its people."[2] The Return is limited to those who were pure in faith and those who were pure in disbelief and hypocrisy from among the people of this religion, not those who passed from previous nations nor others from the Islamic community besides these two groups.[3] The discussion of the Return falls into two areas:

1. Its possibility.
2. The evidence for its occurrence.

Regarding its possibility, it is sufficient to consider the possibility of renewed life on the Day of Resurrection, in addition to the occurrence of similar events among previous nations, such as the revival of a group from the Children of Israel (*al-Baqara*, 55-65), the revival of one who was killed among them (*al-Baqara*, 72-73), the resurrection of 'Uzayr after a hundred years of his death (*al-Baqara*, 259), and the revival of the dead through Jesus (a.s.) (*Āl 'Imrān*, 49).

It will be shown[4] that conceiving of the Return as a form of reincarnation, which is rationally impossible, is an invalid conception.

Among the verses indicating the occurrence of the Return is God's saying:

"And the Day We will gather from every nation a group of those who denied Our signs, and they will be held in check."[5]

The verse emphasizes the gathering of a group from each community, not the gathering of all of them. It is known that the gathering on the Day of Resurrection concerns everyone, not just some. He says: "And the Day We will set the mountains in motion and you will see the earth as a leveled plain, and We will gather them, not leaving behind anyone of them."[6]

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2. *Rasā'il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā*: 1/125.
3. *Al-Masā'il al-Sarawiyya*: 35.
4. Page 374.
5. Qur'an, 27:83.
6. Qur'an, 18:47.

Thus, Glory be to Him informed that there are two types of gathering: general and specific.

As for the nature of the Return's occurrence and its specifics, the Qur'an does not discuss these, just as is the case in its discussion of the intermediate realm (*al-barzakh*) and the intermediate life.

The occurrence of the Return in this community is supported by its occurrence in previous nations as you have learned, and both groups have narrated that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: "What occurred in previous nations will occur in this nation."[7]

Since the Return was among the important events in previous nations, its equivalent must occur in this nation. When al-Ma'mūn al-'Abbāsī asked Imam al-Riḍā (a.s.) about the Return, he replied:

"It is true, it occurred in previous nations, and the Qur'an spoke of it, and the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: 'Everything that occurred in previous nations will occur in this nation, as precisely as one sandal matches another and as one arrow matches another.'"[8]

This summarizes the discussion of the reality of the Return and its evidence. Those who believe in it do not claim that belief in it is on the same level as belief in God and His oneness, prophethood, and resurrection. Rather, it is considered among the definitive certainties, and only those who have not carefully examined its evidence deny it.

Questions and Answers

1. Does belief in the Return not contradict God's saying: "And it is forbidden for [the people of] any town which We have destroyed that they should return"[9] For the verse categorically denies their return?

Answer: The verse specifically concerns the wrongdoers from previous nations who were destroyed by divine punishments and

7. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 9/102 and 112; *Kanz al-'Ummāl*: 11/133; *Kamāl al-Dīn*: 576.
8. *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 53/59, Hadith 45.
9. Qur'an, 21:95.

does not contradict the Return for a group from the Islamic community.

2. Does belief in the Return not contradict the apparent meaning of God's saying: "Until, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, send me back, that I may do good in what I left behind.' No! It is only a word that he speaks, and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected."?[10]

Answer: The verse expresses a general principle that can be qualified by separate evidence. The proof of this is what we learned about the revival of the dead in previous nations. The verse indicates that death, by its nature, is not followed by return, but this does not contradict return in specific cases for higher purposes.

3. Why is it not possible that God's saying: "And the Day We will gather from every nation a company" refers to the Day of Resurrection, and that the intended meaning of "company" from each nation refers to the wrongdoing leaders and their chiefs?

Answer: The apparent meaning of the verses indicates that there are two days: a day when a company from each nation is gathered, and a day when the trumpet is blown. Making the first day part of the Day of Resurrection would necessitate that these two days are one, which contradicts the apparent meaning.

Through what we have mentioned, the invalidity of much of what al-Ālūsī mentioned in his exegesis when discussing this verse becomes clear.[11]

10. Qur'an, 23:99-100.
11. See: *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*: 20/26.

PART VIII

ON THE RESURRECTION

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PROOFS FOR ESTABLISHING THE RESURRECTION

The belief in resurrection is a fundamental element in every divinely-connected law, such that without it, religious laws become mere materialistic human paths with no connection to God. The Qur'an has shown the existence of this belief in divine laws from the time of Adam to Christ.[1] The Qur'an has given it extraordinary attention, as evidenced by the numerous verses concerning resurrection. Some have counted the relevant verses in the Qur'an to be approximately one thousand four hundred, while the distinguished scholar al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (may his soul be sanctified) used to say that discussion of resurrection appears in over two thousand verses. Perhaps he included both implicit and explicit references to it. In any case, this enormous number of verses demonstrates the Qur'an's intense focus on this matter.

There is no doubt that resurrection is inherently possible; the discussion concerns the necessity of its occurrence. There are rational arguments that demonstrate the necessity of the afterlife, to which the Qur'an has guided us.

1. See regarding this the verses: Qur'an, 3:55-57; 7:24, 35, 36; 14:41; 26:87; 29:17; 40:5, 32, 40, 43; 71:17, 18.

First: Protecting Creation from Futility

The Qur'an proves the necessity of resurrection by showing that the afterlife is the purpose of human creation, and without it, human life would be confined to the worldly framework, making their creation futile and meaningless. God is above performing futile acts. He says:

"Did you think that We created you in vain and that you would not be returned to Us?"[2]

Among the subtle explanations in this regard is His statement:

Among the subtle explanations in this regard is God's statement:

"We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in play. We did not create them except with truth, but most of them do not know. Indeed, the Day of Separation is their appointed time, all of them." [3]

You see that He mentions the Day of Separation after negating that creation is play, and this expresses that the otherworldly existence preserves creation from futility and play.

Similar to this are the verses that describe Him, exalted is He, as the Truth, then arrange upon this the resurrection of the dead and the otherworldly existence. God says: "That is because God is the Truth, and that He gives life to the dead." [4]

And other verses besides these. [5]

Second: Resurrection is Required by Divine Justice

The servants are of two groups: obedient and disobedient. Equating between them in its different forms[6] contradicts justice. Here, reason independently determines that there must be differentiation between them in terms of reward and punishment. Since this is not realized in

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2. Qur'an, 23:115.
3. Qur'an, 44:38-40.
4. Qur'an, 22:6.
5. See: Qur'an, 22:62-66; 31:30-33.
6. These are: rewarding everyone, punishing everyone, or leaving them neglected without gathering them.

worldly existence, there must be another existence where this differentiation is realized. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī points to this explanation, saying:

We see that death comes to both the obedient and disobedient before either of them receives what they deserve of reward or punishment. If they are not gathered to receive what they deserve, this would necessitate its complete invalidation.[7]

This rational proof is indicated by God's statement: "Or should We treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should We treat the God-fearing like the wicked?"[8]

And His statement, exalted is He: "Should We treat the Muslims like the criminals? What is wrong with you? How do you judge?"[9]

And His statement, glory be to Him:

"Indeed, the Hour is coming – I almost conceal it – so that every soul may be recompensed for what it strives for." [10]

His saying "so that may be recompensed" indicates that the establishment of the resurrection is the realization of reward and punishment, which are required by divine justice.

Third: The Resurrection is the Manifestation of the Fulfillment of His Promises

He has promised the obedient ones reward in numerous verses, and there is no doubt that fulfilling promises is good while breaking them is reprehensible. Therefore, keeping promises necessitates the occurrence of resurrection. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī said: "The obligation to fulfill promises and wisdom necessitate the obligation of resurrection."[11] This proof is indicated in His statement:

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7. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 146.
8. *Sūrat Ṣād*: 28.
9. *Sūrat al-Qalam*: 35-36.
10. Qur'an, 20:15.
11. *Kashf al-Murād*, sixth objective, fourth issue.

"Our Lord, surely You will gather the people for a Day about which there is no doubt. Indeed, God does not fail in His promise."[12]

Note

The Qur'an has eloquently emphasized the Creator's power and knowledge in responding to the objections of opponents. The reason for this is clear, as most of their objections stem from heedlessness or ignorance of God's absolute power and vast knowledge. The resurrection of the dead is not among logical impossibilities; rather, those who deny or consider it improbable do so due to their ignorance of God's absolute power and comprehensive knowledge. Here are some examples of verses in this regard:

"And it is He who begins creation, then repeats it, and that is easier for Him."[13]

"And he presents an example for Us, while forgetting his own creation. He says, 'Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?' Say, 'He will give them life who produced them the first time; and He is, of all creation, Knowing.'"[14]

"Those who disbelieve say, 'The Hour will not come to us.' Say, 'Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come to you. [He is] the Knower of the unseen.' Not absent from Him is an atom's weight within the heavens or within the earth or [what is] smaller than that or greater, except that it is in a clear register."[15]

"That is because God is the Truth and because He gives life to the dead and because He is over all things competent."[16]

"When we have died and have become dust, that is a distant return? We know what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a retaining register."[17]

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12. Qur'an, 3:9.
13. Qur'an, 30:27.
14. Qur'an, 36:78-79.
15. Qur'an, 34:3.
16. Qur'an, 22:6.
17. Qur'an, 50:3-4.

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THE PERSISTENCE OF THE HUMAN SOUL AFTER DEATH

Some of the doubts raised by those who deny resurrection stem from the misconception that humans are merely a collection of cells, vessels, nerves, bones, and skin functioning systematically. When a person dies, they become dust, and nothing remains of their personality. How then could the resurrected person be the same as the person who lived in this world? Thus, the purpose of resurrection—the fulfillment of divine justice through rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient—cannot be achieved. Perhaps their statement alludes to this doubt:

"When we are lost within the earth, will we indeed be in a new creation?"[1]

The Glorified has answered this with His statement: "Say, 'The angel of death who has been entrusted with you will take you. Then to your Lord you will be returned.'"[2]

This means that your true personality is never lost in the earth, for it is preserved, unchanging and unfading. This personality is the criterion for the unity between the person gathered in the hereafter

1. Qur'an, 32:10.
2. Qur'an, 32:11.

and the worldly person. The verse expresses the persistence of the soul after death, and this answer is fundamental in addressing most doubts about bodily resurrection.

The matter of the soul's immateriality (*tajarrud*) and persistence has occupied the minds of thinkers, who have presented rational arguments for it. The Qur'an has also given attention to explaining it in numerous verses. In what follows, we will pursue the investigation of the soul's immateriality through both these paths: the rational and the scriptural.

A) Rational Proofs

The rational investigation into the immateriality (*tajarrud*) of the soul is vast and encompasses various proofs. We will suffice here with explaining two proofs, and whoever seeks further detail may refer to the books prepared for this purpose.[3]

1. The Persistence of Human Identity Amid Physical Changes

Science has proven that change and transformation are necessary effects of material beings. The cells that make up the human body are constantly changing and being replaced. Scientists have calculated the average rate of this renewal and found that it occurs comprehensively throughout the body once every ten years.

However, each of us feels that our self remains constant amid these physical changes, and finds that there is something to which all states from childhood, adolescence, youth, and middle age are attributed. Thus, beyond the human body and its physical transformations, there exists an enduring reality that remains constant despite changing conditions and the passage of time.

If this reality to which these attributes are ascribed were some-

3. See: *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*: 2/368-371; *Al-Asfār*: 8/38; *Uṣūl al-Falsafa* by ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Article 3.

thing material subject to the law of change and transformation, it would not be valid to attribute these characteristics to a single entity, such that one could say: "I am the one who wrote this line when I was a child or youth, and I am the one who did such and such in that state and at that time."

2. Indivisibility as a Sign of Immateriality

Division and partition are properties inherent to matter. However, when each of us examines what we observe in the core of our being, which we express as "I," we find it to be a simple essence that cannot be divided or partitioned. The absence of material properties is evidence that it is not material.

Indivisibility is not unique to the soul but extends to psychological qualities such as love, hate, will, aversion, conviction, and the like. Consider your love for your child and hatred for your enemy – do you find any composition in them? Can they be divided into parts? Certainly not.

Thus, it becomes clear that the soul and its effects, the self and psychological qualities, are all real existents that lie outside the framework of matter.

B) The Qur'an and the Immateriality of the Soul

There are many Qur'anic verses that indicate, either explicitly or implicitly, the survival of the soul after death. Here are some examples:

God says: "God takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought."[4]

The word "taking" (*tawaffī*) means to seize and take possession,

4. Qur'an, 39:42.

not to cause death. Thus, the verse indicates that beyond the body, humans have something that God takes at the time of death and sleep. He keeps it if death has been decreed for it, and releases it if death has not been decreed, until an appointed time.

God says: "And do not think of those who have been killed in the way of God as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, rejoicing in what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them - that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."[5]

The verse's explicit indication of the martyrs' life cannot be denied. It states that: first, they are alive; second, they receive provision; and third, they experience psychological effects such as joy and receive glad tidings. Interpreting this life as merely living on in people's consciousness, hearts, and gatherings is a materialistic interpretation that contradicts the real attributes of life mentioned.

God says: "And the worst punishment encompassed the people of Pharaoh - the Fire, they are exposed to it morning and evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said], 'Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.'"[6]

The verse's relevance to our purpose is clear.

God says: "It was said, 'Enter Paradise.' He said, 'Would that my people knew of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored.'"[7]

The one addressed with "Enter Paradise" and who expressed this wish was the believer of the family of Yāsīn, whose name was Ḥabīb al-Najjār according to traditions. His story is well-known. The verse indicates that he remains after death, receiving provision in Paradise, wishing that his people knew of the honor bestowed upon him.

5. Qur'an, 3:169-170.
6. Qur'an, 40:45-46.
7. Qur'an, 36:26-72.

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PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION IN THE QUR'AN

The affirmation of both physical and spiritual resurrection depends on several matters:

1. Belief in the immateriality of the human soul.
2. Belief that the soul returns to the body at the time of gathering.
3. There are partial and complete pains and pleasures, both physical and spiritual.

Anyone who carefully examines the verses concerning resurrection will find that the resurrection emphasized by the Qur'an involves the return of the body in which humans lived in this world and the soul's reattachment to it. It is not satisfied with merely the soul's life in the hereafter, nor does it limit reward and punishment to physical forms alone. Rather, it also establishes non-sensory spiritual rewards and punishments. Here are examples of verses addressing these two aspects:

1. Verses that mention in the story of Abraham, the revival of

'Uzayr, the cow of the Children of Israel, and similar accounts.[1]

2. Verses that explicitly state that humans were created from earth, will return to it, and will emerge from it.[2]
3. Verses that indicate that gathering (*ḥashr*) means emerging from graves and tombs.[3]
4. Verses that point to the testimony of bodily organs on the Day of Resurrection.[4]
5. Verses that describe the replacement of skins of the inmates of Hell after they are burned.[5]

All of this relates to the first criterion. As for the second criterion, the verses concerning physical pains and pleasures are too numerous to count, with *Sūrat al-Wāqi'a* and *Sūrat al-Raḥmān* serving as sufficient examples. Let us focus on examples of verses that address intellectual pains and pleasures:

God says: "God has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from God is greater. That is the great attainment."[6]

We see that God places His approval in contrast to other physical pleasures, describing it as greater than the former and as the great attainment. It is known that this type of pleasure does not relate to the body, but rather is a pleasure perceived by the intellect and soul at its highest degree.

God says: "God has promised the hypocrite men and hypocrite women and the disbelievers the fire of Hell, wherein they will abide

1. Qur'an, 2:68-73, 243, 259-260.
2. Qur'an, 7:25; 20:55; 30:25; 71:18
3. Qur'an, 22:7; 36:51; 54:7; 70:43
4. Qur'an, 24:24; 36:65; 41:41
5. Qur'an, 4:56; 47:15
6. Qur'an, 9:72

eternally. It is sufficient for them. And God has cursed them, and for them is an enduring punishment."[7]

The magnitude of this pain is evident from this verse's placement before the verse about approval, as if the two verses express intellectual pleasures and pains that the soul perceives without need for the body.

God says in describing the inhabitants of Hell: "Thus will God show them their deeds as regrets upon them."[8]

Indeed, the torment of regret (*ḥasra*) is more severe on the soul than what befalls it of bodily torment, and for this reason the Day of Resurrection is called the Day of Regret. God says: "And warn them of the Day of Regret."[9]

We conclude this discussion with what the investigator al-Ṭūsī stated on this matter, where he said:

"As for the prophets who preceded Muhammad (s.a.w.), what is apparent from the words of their communities is that Moses (a.s.) did not mention bodily resurrection, nor was it revealed to him in the Torah. However, this came in the books of prophets who came after him, like Ezekiel and Isaiah (a.s.), and therefore the Jews affirmed it. As for the Gospel, it mentions that the righteous will become like angels and will have eternal life and great happiness, and what is more apparent is that what is mentioned in it is spiritual resurrection.

As for the Qur'an, both types are mentioned in it: The spiritual type appears in verses such as: 'And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of comfort for eyes,' and 'For those who have done good is the best and more,' and 'But approval from God is greater.'

As for the physical type, it appears more times than can be counted, and most of it cannot accept allegorical interpretation, such as the Almighty's words:

'He says, "Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?" Say, "He will give them life who produced them the first time."'

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7. Qur'an, 9:68
8. Qur'an, 2:167
9. Qur'an, 19:39

'And suddenly they will emerge from the graves to their Lord, hastening.' 'And look at the bones, how We raise them and then We cover them with flesh.' 'Does man think that We will not assemble his bones? Yes indeed; We are able to proportion even his fingertips.' 'And they will say to their skins, "Why have you testified against us?"'

Then he rejected the theory of allegorical interpretation of verses about physical resurrection by comparison with verses about divine attributes that outwardly indicate anthropomorphism, saying:

The comparison with anthropomorphism is incorrect, because anthropomorphism contradicts rational evidence that proves its impossibility, so resorting to allegorical interpretation became necessary. As for physical resurrection, there is no evidence, neither rational nor traditional, proving its impossibility, so the relevant texts must be implemented according to their apparent meanings."[10]

The Doubt of the Eater and the Eaten

This doubt is one of the oldest objections raised in theological books concerning physical resurrection, and theologians and divine philosophers have given great attention to refuting it. The problem is presented in two forms, which we will present along with their answers:

The First Form:

If a disbelieving person were to eat a believing person, their body or part of it would become part of the disbeliever's body. Since the disbeliever will be punished, this would necessitate the punishment of the believer, which would be unjust to them.

The answer to this is clear, for it is the soul that perceives pain and pleasure, while the body is merely a means for perceiving what is sensible of these. Therefore, the believer's body becoming part of the disbeliever's body does not necessitate the punishment of the believer, because the one truly being punished is the disbeliever's soul and self, not the believer's soul. This is similar to taking a kidney

10. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*: 393-394

from a living person and connecting it to another person - if the latter is punished or blessed, the one experiencing punishment or blessing is that person alone, with no connection to the one who donated their kidney.

The Second Form:

If a person eats another person, the eaten body or part of it becomes part of the eater's body. These parts will either be restored with the eater's body, or restored with the eaten person's body, or not be restored at all.[11] All of these possibilities necessitate that the body will not return in its complete and identical form, either in one of them as in the first two assumptions, or in both as in the last assumption. Therefore, physical resurrection in the sense of gathering bodies in their identical form is invalid.

The well-known response among theologians is that the human body is composed of essential parts (*aṣliyya*) and surplus parts (*fāḍila*). The essential parts remain after death, and during restoration, they are combined with other additional parts. What matters in physical resurrection is the restoration of these essential parts, and the essential parts in each body are surplus in others.[12] This is what the investigator al-Ṭūsī referred to when he said: "It is not necessary to restore the surplus parts of the accountable being."[13]

I say: Physical resurrection does not depend on the resurrected body being the same worldly body even in its earthly matter. Rather, if a person's resurrected body is formed from any earthly matter, and the soul becomes attached to it, and it is identical in form to the worldly body, then it can be truly said that the resurrected being is the same as the one who existed in this world.

This is supported by the saying of Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.):

"When God takes him unto Himself, He transforms that soul in Paradise into a form like his form, and they eat and drink. When newcomers arrive, they recognize them by that form which they had

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11. As for assuming its return with both the eater and the eaten, this is completely invalid, as it is rationally impossible.

12. *Qawā'id al-Marām* by Ibn Maytham al-Baḥrānī: 144

13. *Kashf al-Murād*: Objective 6, Issue 4

in this world."[14] You can see that the Imam (a.s.) mentions the word "form" (*ṣūra*), and perhaps this reminds us that in physical resurrection, it is sufficient for the resurrected being to be united with the original in form, without needing unity in earthly matter, such that if there were an impediment to creating the human from it, physical resurrection would fail and not be realized. This is also apparent from the verse:

"Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them?"[15]

Al-Taftāzānī said:

"Perhaps the words of al-Ghazālī and many who believe in both types of resurrection tend toward the meaning that God creates from parts after the destruction of the body, and it does not harm us that it is not identical to the first body in terms of individual identity, since it is impossible to restore exactly what has ceased to exist. What is testified to in the texts about the people of Paradise being hairless and beardless, and about the disbeliever's molar being like Mount Uḥud supports this, as does God's saying: 'Every time their skins are burned through, We will replace them with other skins'.[16]"

It is not unlikely that God's saying: "Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them?"[17] points to this.[18]

Al-'Allāma al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (may his soul be sanctified) said:

"When the subsequent body of a human is considered in relation to their previous body, it is like it but not identical to it. However, when the human with the subsequent body is compared to the human with the previous body, it is identical to it, not merely like it, because personality is determined by the soul, which remains exactly the same."[19]

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14. *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 6, Chapter on the States of *Barzakh*, Hadith 32
15. Qur'an, 36:81
16. Qur'an, 4:56
17. Qur'an, 36:81
18. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/90-91
19. *Al-Mīzān*: 17/114

55

PROOFS OF THE INVALIDITY OF REINCARNATION

Reincarnation (*tanāsukh*) is the transfer of the soul from one body to another in this world, continuing without end. Those who believe in reincarnation deny the hereafter and explain reward and punishment in terms of worldly pleasures and pains in this existence. Al-Shahrastānī said:

"Reincarnation means that cycles and epochs repeat endlessly, and in each cycle occurs what occurred in the first, with reward and punishment taking place in this world, not in another realm where there is no action. The deeds we perform now are merely recompense for actions we performed in past cycles. The comfort, pleasure, joy, and ease we experience are arranged according to the righteous deeds we performed in past cycles. And the grief, sorrow, hardship, and difficulty we experience are arranged according to the wicked deeds we committed previously. So it was in the beginning, and so it will be in the end."[1]

The following issues refute the doctrine of reincarnation:

1. They say: "The misfortunes and pains that afflict some

1. *Al-Milal wa-l-Nihal*: 1/55

groups of people are in reality retribution for sins they committed in their previous lives when their souls were attached to other bodies, just as the blessings and pleasures enjoyed by other groups are also rewards for their good deeds in their previous lives." According to this view, everyone deserves their current situation, so there should be no objection to the arrogant and affluent, just as there should be no effort to obtain justice for the oppressed and weak. This undermines the foundations of ethics and leaves no room for human virtues. This belief serves as the best means for corrupt individuals and tyrants to justify their reprehensible actions.

2. This belief contradicts the doctrine of resurrection (*ma'ād*), for which rational proof has established its necessity. It is clear that whatever contradicts sound proof is false; therefore, the doctrine of reincarnation is false.
3. The doctrine of reincarnation necessarily entails two souls existing in one body, which is impossible. This necessary entailment can be explained as follows: whenever a body develops a constitution suitable for receiving a managing soul, that soul must necessarily be bestowed upon it by the Bestower without delay, in accordance with divine wisdom which seeks to bring every potential being to its specific perfection. If the reincarnated soul were also to attach to this body, as the doctrine of reincarnation maintains, this would result in two souls existing in one body.

The impossibility of this consequence is because the individuation of each member of a species occurs through its soul and specific form. Therefore, positing two souls in one body is equivalent to positing two essences for one essence and two individuals in one individual, which is impossible. Moreover, this contradicts what every person experiences in the depths of their being and inner consciousness.

If you say: The attachment of the reincarnated soul, when coin-

ciding with the body's readiness to receive a soul, prevents the bestowal of a new soul, thus avoiding the problem of two souls in one body.

I respond: The bodily matter's preparedness to receive a soul from the Bestower of forms is analogous to a wall's capacity to receive sunlight both directly and through reflection - one does not prevent the other. However, the coexistence of two souls in one body is rationally impossible, and this impossibility stems from the assumption of reincarnation, as is evident.

Reincarnation and Metamorphosis

It might be said: "If reincarnation is impossible, how did metamorphosis (*maskh*) occur in previous nations, as explicitly stated in the Qur'an?"[2]

The answer is that the impossible aspects of reincarnation are two:

First: The coexistence of two souls in one body.

Second: The regression of the human soul from its perfection to a level corresponding to its new body.

Both these impossibilities are absent in the case of metamorphosis, for the reality of the metamorphosis of the condemned and cursed nation was that their evil souls took on the form of pigs and monkeys, not that their human souls transformed into the souls of monkeys and pigs. Al-Taftāzānī said:

"The dispute concerns whether souls, after separating from bodies, attach to other bodies in this world for management, control and acquisition, not whether bodily forms transform as in metamorphosis..."[3]

Al-ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī said: "The metamorphosed human

2. See: *Al-Asfār*: 9/10
3. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 3/327

remains a metamorphosed human, not one who has lost their humanity."[4]

Reincarnation and Return

It might be asked: "What is the difference between the false doctrine of reincarnation and the belief in return (*raj'a*) as held by the Imamiyya?"

Answer: The difference between them is clear after understanding what has preceded. Return does not entail the transfer of a soul from one body to another, nor the coexistence of two souls in one body, nor the regression of the soul from its attained perfection. Through this, one can understand the value of Aḥmad Amīn al-Miṣrī's statement where he says: "Under Shi'ism emerged the doctrine of the transmigration of souls."[5]

4. *Al-Mīzān*: 1/209
5. *Fajr al-Islām*: 277

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THE GRAVE AND THE INTERMEDIATE REALM

The intermediate realm (*barzakh*) is humanity's first abode after death. The Qur'an explicitly states that after death, humans face an intermediate realm until the Day of Resurrection. God says:

"And behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected."[1]

However, this verse alone does not indicate the existence of life in this interval. Nevertheless, there are other verses from which we can understand the existence of a real life for humans in that plane of existence. Here are some of them:

God says: "They will say: 'Our Lord, You have caused us to die twice and given us life twice, and we have admitted our sins. So is there to any way out?'"[2]

It appears that the intended meaning of the two deaths and two lives is as follows:

The first death is the death from worldly life. The first life is life in

1. Qur'an, 23:100
2. Qur'an, 40:11

the intermediate realm, which continues until the first blowing of the trumpet.

The second death occurs at the first blowing of the trumpet. God says: "And the trumpet will be blown, and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall dead."[3]

The second life occurs at the second blowing of the trumpet. God says: "Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on."[4]

The multiple blowings of the trumpet can be understood from these two verses. The first results in the death of all in the heavens and earth, except whom God wills, and the second results in people rising from their graves. Regarding the second blowing, the Almighty says: "And the trumpet will be blown, and We will gather them all together."[5]

And the Almighty says: "And when the trumpet is blown, no relationship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another."[6]

The varying effects indicate multiple blowings of the trumpet.

In light of this, humans have a life after death from worldly life, which is an intermediate life (*barzakhiyya*) between the two existences.

God says: "Because of their sins they were drowned and put into the Fire, and they found not for themselves besides God any helpers."[7]

This verse indicates that they entered the Fire immediately after drowning, as shown by the conjunction "fa" ("then") in "fa-udkhilū" ("then they were put").

God says: "The Fire, they are exposed to it morning and

3. Qur'an, 39:68
4. Qur'an, 36:51
5. Qur'an, 18:99
6. Qur'an, 23:101
7. Qur'an, 71:25

evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said], 'Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.'"[8]

This verse describes the exposure of Pharaoh's people to the Fire morning and evening before the Day of Resurrection, as evidenced by the phrase "And the Day the Hour appears." For this reason, the first punishment is described as exposure to the Fire, while the punishment in the hereafter is described as entering the severest punishment, indicating that the punishment in the intermediate realm is less severe than the punishment on the Day of Resurrection.

There are other verses that indicate human life in this interval between the worldly life and resurrection - a life appropriate to these circumstances - which were mentioned when discussing the immateriality of the soul. We will suffice with this amount here to avoid prolongation.

As for the tradition (*sunna*), we will suffice with what has been reported from al-Ṣādiq (a.s.), when he was asked about the souls of believers, he said:

"They are in chambers in Paradise, eating from its food and drinking from its drink, saying 'Our Lord, establish the Hour for us and fulfill what You have promised us.'"

When asked about the souls of polytheists, he said: "They are in the Fire being punished, saying 'Do not establish the Hour for us and do not fulfill what You have promised us.'"[9]

The Questioning in the Grave and its Punishment and Blessing

Since the intermediate life is the first stage of life after the worldly life, it becomes clear to us that what Muslims have agreed upon regarding the questioning of the deceased in their grave, and their punishment if they were evil, or their blessing if they were believing and righteous, is correct without doubt, and that the person living in

8. Qur'an, 40:46
9. *Al-Biḥār*: 6/169, Chapter on the States of *Barzakh*, Hadith 122; p. 270, Hadith 126

the intermediate realm is questioned about matters, then either punished or blessed.

Al-Ṣadūq said:

"Our belief regarding the questioning in the grave is that it is an inevitable truth. Whoever answers correctly will gain comfort and fragrance in their grave, and Paradise of bliss in the hereafter. And whoever does not answer correctly will have a reception of scalding water in their grave, and burning in hellfire in the hereafter."

Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd said:

Authentic traditions have come from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that angels descend upon those in graves and question them about their religions. The wordings of these reports are similar to each other. Among them is that two angels of God, called Nākir and Nakīr, descend upon the deceased and question them about their Lord, their Prophet, their religion, and their Imam. If they answer truthfully, they are handed over to the angels of blessing, and if they falter, they are handed over to the angels of punishment. In some narrations, the names of the two angels who descend upon the disbeliever are Nākir and Nakīr, while the names of the two angels who descend upon the believer are Mubashshir and Bashīr.

He continued:

The two angels only descend upon someone who is alive, and they only question those who can understand the question and comprehend its meaning. This indicates that God Most High brings the servant back to life after death for questioning, and maintains their life either for blessing if they deserve it, or for punishment if they deserve it.[10] Muslims apparently agree on this matter, as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal says:

"The torment of the grave is real. The servant is questioned about their religion and their Lord, and they see their place in either Hell or Paradise, and Munkar and Nakīr are real."[11]

The Mu'tazilites have been accused of denying the torment of the

10. *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqād*: 45-46

11. *Al-Sunna*: 47; See also: *Al-Ibāna* by al-Ash'arī: 27

grave, but this attribution is incorrect. Only one of them denied it - Ḍirār ibn ʿAmr, who had already separated from the Muʿtazilites, as clarified by the Muʿtazilite judge ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[12] All of this is beyond doubt. The discussion rather concerns what is meant here by "grave." A careful examination of the previous verses we used to prove the intermediate life (*barzakh*), and the traditions concerning the intermediate realm, clearly shows that "grave" does not refer to the physical location where a person is buried, which is only large enough for their corpse. Rather, it refers to the realm in which humans exist between death and resurrection. The grave is used metaphorically for this realm because entering the grave coincides with or marks the beginning of one's entry into this state.

The traditions apparently indicate that the soul becomes attached to bodies similar to worldly bodies, but with a subtlety appropriate to life in that realm. This attachment does not necessitate accepting reincarnation (*tanāsukh*), because reincarnation means the return of something from actuality to potentiality - that is, the soul's return to this world through the stages of sperm, then blood clot, then flesh, until becoming a complete human. This is rejected both rationally and religiously, as previously discussed, and such implications do not follow from the soul's attachment to a body more subtle than the material body in the second realm.

Shaykh al-Bahāʾī said:

Some might imagine that believing in the souls' attachment to other forms after leaving their elemental bodies - as indicated by the traditions - amounts to believing in reincarnation (*tanāsukh*). This is a foolish assumption, because the reincarnation that Muslims unanimously reject is the attachment of souls, after their bodies' destruction, to other bodies in this world. As for believing in their attachment to ideal bodies in another realm during the intermediate period (*barzakh*), until the great resurrection when they return to

12. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 730

their original bodies by their Creator's permission - this has nothing to do with reincarnation.[13]

13. *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 6/277

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THE RECKONING AND THE WITNESSES

The Reckoning on the Day of Resurrection

Among the names of the Day of Resurrection is "the Day of Reckoning." The Qur'an relates Abraham's (a.s.) prayer to God Most High, where he said:

"Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day when the reckoning will be established".[1]

It also relates that Moses (a.s.), in response to Pharaoh when he threatened to kill him, said: "Indeed, I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant one who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning".[2]

The purpose of the reckoning is not for God to determine what reward or punishment the servants deserve by examining their good and bad deeds - this is obvious. Rather, its purpose is to establish proof against the disobedient and to demonstrate His divine justice toward the servants in matters of recompense. For this reason, He establishes various witnesses against them. Shaykh al-Ṣadūq has an

1. Qur'an, 14:41
2. Qur'an, 40:27

extensive discussion on this topic which we present to clarify the matter. He said:

Our belief regarding the reckoning is that it is real. Some of it will be conducted by God Mighty and Majestic, and some by His proofs (*hujaj*). The reckoning of the Prophets and Imams (a.s.) will be conducted by the Mighty and Majestic, while each Prophet will conduct the reckoning of his successors, and the successors will conduct the reckoning of their communities. God Blessed and Most High is the witness over the Prophets and Messengers, and they are witnesses over the successors, and the Imams are witnesses over the people. This is indicated in God's words:

"That the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over mankind".[3]

And His words: "So how will it be when We bring from every nation a witness and bring you as a witness over these?".[4]

And God Most High said: "Can they be like those who have a clear proof from their Lord, and whom a witness from Him follows?".[5]

And the witness is the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

And God Most High said: "Indeed, to Us is their return, then upon Us is their reckoning".[6]

Among creation, there are those who will enter Paradise without reckoning. However, questioning will occur for all creation, according to God Most High's words:

"Then We will surely question those to whom [Our message] was sent, and We will surely question the messengers".[7]

This means about religion. Everyone who is called to account will suffer, even if only by the length of standing. No one will be saved from the Fire or enter Paradise through their deeds alone, but only through God Most High's mercy.

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3. Qur'an, 22:78
4. Qur'an, 4:41
5. Qur'an, 11:17
6. Qur'an, 88:25-26
7. Qur'an, 7:6

God Blessed and Most High will address His servants, from the first to the last, about the sum of their deeds in a single address that each person will hear concerning their own case and none other. Each will think they alone are being addressed, and one address will not distract Him from another.

God Most High will bring forth for each person a book they will find spread open, speaking of all their deeds, leaving out nothing small or large but recording it. God will make them their own reckoner and judge over themselves by saying to them:

"Read your book. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant".[8]

God Blessed and Most High will seal the mouths of some people, and their hands, feet, and all their limbs will testify to what they used to conceal.

"And they will say to their skins, 'Why have you testified against us?' They will say, 'God has made us speak, as He makes everything speak, and He created you the first time, and to Him you will return'".[9,10]

The Witnesses on the Day of Resurrection

It can be understood from the verses of the Qur'an that there are different types of witnesses on the Day of Reckoning, including:

1. God, Glory be to Him:

God Most High says: "Indeed, God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, God is, over all things, a Witness".[11]

And He also says: "Why do you disbelieve in the verses of God while God is Witness over what you do?".[12]

2. The Prophet of Every Nation:

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8. Qur'an, 17:14
9. Qur'an, 41:21
10. *Risālat al-I'tiqādāt* by Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, Chapter 28, Chapter on Belief in Reckoning and Scales
11. Qur'an, 22:17
12. Qur'an, 3:98

God Glory be to Him says: "And [mention] the Day when We will resurrect among every nation a witness over them from themselves".[13]

And He also says: "And [warn of] the Day He will call them and say, 'Where are My partners which you used to claim?' And We will extract from every nation a witness".[14]

It appears that this witness from every nation is their prophet, even though this is not explicitly stated in the verses. This is because the testimony established there must contain truths that cannot be disputed. Therefore, this witness must be knowledgeable about the realities of the deeds about which they testify. This can only be achieved by one for whom the present and absent are equal, and this station can only be conceived for the prophet of each nation.

3. The Prophet of Islam:

God Glory be to Him says: "So how [will it be] when We bring from every nation a witness and We bring you [O Muhammad] against these [people] as a witness".[15]

4. Some Members of the Islamic Nation:

God Glory be to Him says: "And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you".[16]

Although the address in this verse is to the Islamic nation (*umma*), what is meant is some of them, similar to His saying: "And made you kings" addressing the Children of Israel, where some of them are meant. The evidence that only some of the nation is intended is that most of its members have no knowledge of deeds except their outward forms when they are in the presence of those being testified against, which is insufficient for testimony. For what is meant by testimony is witnessing the realities of deeds and inner meanings of disbelief and faith, and everything hidden from the senses and concealed within humans regarding what hearts earn, upon which

13. Qur'an, 16:89
14. Qur'an, 28:74-75
15. Qur'an, 4:41
16. Qur'an, 2:143

the reckoning of the Lord of the Worlds turns. God Glory be to Him says: "But He will impose blame upon you for what your hearts have earned".[17]

This is not within the capacity of the ordinary person even when present with those being testified against, let alone when absent. This indicates that what is meant are individuals from the nation who have that capability through God's special care, enabling them to perceive the realities of people's deeds about whom they testify.

Furthermore, the minimum requirement for witnesses is justice, piety, truthfulness, and trustworthiness. The vast majority of the nation lack these qualities and their testimony would not be accepted even for a measure of dates or a bundle of herbs, so how could their testimony be accepted on the Day of Resurrection?!

This is indicated in the narration of al-Zubayrī from Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.), who said: "Do you think that one whose testimony is not permitted in this world for a measure of dates, God would seek his testimony on the Day of Resurrection and accept it from him in the presence of all past nations?! Never, God did not mean such people from His creation."[18]

5. The Limbs and Organs:

God Glory be to Him says: "On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do".[19,20]

As for the nature of this testimony, it is among the matters of the unseen that we believe in, and making them speak is not difficult for God, as His power encompasses all things, as indicated by His words:

"They will say, 'God has made us speak, [He] who has made everything speak'".[21]

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17. Qur'an, 2:225
18. *Nūr al-Thaqalayn*: 1/113, Hadith 409
19. Qur'an, 24:24
20. Similar in meaning are verse 65 of Sūrat Yāsīn and verse 20 of Sūrat Fuṣṣilat
21. Qur'an, 41:21

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THE BALANCE AND THE PATH

Among the theological discussions relating to the resurrection is the discussion of the Balance (*mīzān*) and the Path (*ṣirāṭ*). There is no disagreement among Muslims regarding belief in these two, rather the disagreement concerns their intended meaning. We will first mention the various opinions in this area, then explain what we consider to be correct, so we say:

The Balance

Scholars differed regarding the nature of the Balance (*mīzān*) on the Day of Resurrection. The elders of the Mu'tazilites said: A real balance with two scales will be set up to weigh what becomes apparent of the state of those who are accountable at that time before the people gathered there, such that the book of obedience will be placed in the scale of good and the book of disobedience in the scale of evil, and the preponderance of one will serve as evidence for one of the two states, or something similar to this, since the Balance has been mentioned in scripture and the basic principle in speech is literal meaning when possible.

'Abbād and a group from Basra and others from Baghdad said

that what is meant by the balances is justice rather than a literal balance.[1] I say: There is no doubt that the next life is more perfect than this life and that there is no way to make humans understand the realities of that world and its mysteries that are hidden from us except by using terms that humans use for sensory matters. Therefore, there is no reason to interpret the Balance as the conventional balance, especially since it is used in the Qur'an for something other than this physical balance. God says:

"We have sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that people may establish justice".[2]

There is no reason to restrict the Balance here to that which weighs physical objects, given that the goal is for people to establish justice in all their affairs - doctrinal, political, social and economic.

Similarly, interpreting the Balance as justice, or as the Prophet, or as the Qur'an are all interpretations by example. The Balance has only one meaning: that by which something is weighed, and this differs according to what is being weighed, whether it is a body, heat, light, pressure, humidity or something else. Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn said:

"The balance of each thing is of its own kind, so the balances are different, and the Balance mentioned in the Qur'an should be understood as the most noble of balances, which is the balance of the Day of Reckoning, as indicated by His words: 'And We shall set up just balances for the Day of Resurrection.' It is the balance of knowledge and the balance of spiritual deeds that arise from physical actions".[3] Our master, the scholar al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, may he be sanctified, has an elegant investigation on this topic that he derived from the Qur'anic verses, the summary of which is:

The apparent meaning of the verses about the Balance (*mīzān*)[4] is that good deeds cause the Balance to be heavy while bad deeds make it light, as they always establish heaviness on the side of good deeds

1. *Kashf al-Murād*: Objective Six, Issue Fourteen
2. Qur'an, 57:25
3. *Al-Asfār*: 9/299
4. See: Qur'an, 7:9; 23:103; 101:11

and lightness on the side of bad deeds. It is not that good deeds are weighed to determine their weight, then bad deeds are weighed to determine their weight, and then the two weights are compared to see which is greater, as this would necessarily allow for the possibility of the two weights being equal, as in the balances we use such as the two-pan balance, steelyard, and others.

From this perspective, it is supported that there is something else by which deeds are measured, and weight belongs to it. Whatever is a good deed corresponds to it and is weighed by it, which is the heaviness of the Balance, and whatever is a bad deed does not correspond to it and is not weighed by it, which is the lightness of the Balance. This is similar to what we observe in our balances, where there is a measure - a unit of weight like the *mithqāl* - placed in one pan, then goods are placed in the other pan. If it equals the *mithqāl* in weight according to what the balance indicates, it is accepted; otherwise, it is inevitably rejected. The *mithqāl* is in reality the measure by which weighing occurs, while the steelyard, two-pan balance, and similar devices are preliminaries for what the *mithqāl* shows regarding the state of the goods being weighed in terms of heaviness and lightness.

Thus for deeds there is a single measure by which they are weighed. For prayer, for example, there is a balance by which it is weighed, which is the complete prayer that is the true prayer. For alms and spending there is something similar, and for speech and words there is the true word that contains no falsehood, and so on, as indicated by God's words:

"O you who believe! Fear God as He should truly be feared".[5]

God will weigh deeds on the Day of Resurrection with truth, so whatever truth a deed contains constitutes its weight and heaviness.

According to this, weight in the verse means heaviness rather than the verbal meaning, and the term "balances" is used in plural form because each person has many balances due to the different truths by which deeds are weighed varying according to the deeds.

5. Qur'an, 3:102

The truth in prayer - which is the true prayer - is different from the truth in alms, fasting, pilgrimage and other acts, and this is clear.[6]

The Path (*ṣirāṭ*)

It is apparent from the Qur'an, and explicitly supported by traditions, that there exists a path in the hereafter that every believer and disbeliever must traverse. God says: "By your Lord, We will surely gather them and the devils, then We will bring them to their knees around Hell... There is not one of you but will come to it. This is a decreed certainty with your Lord".[7]

The exegetes have differed regarding the meaning of "coming to it" (*wurūd*), with some saying it means reaching and overlooking Hell without entering it, while others say it means entering it. In any case, a Muslim must necessarily believe in the existence of a path in the hereafter, which is the route of the believer to Paradise and the disbeliever to Hell.

Then they differed on whether the path is a single one that both groups cross, or whether the people of Paradise and Hell each have their own distinct path. Al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī said:

"As for the path, it has been said that in the hereafter there are two paths: one to Paradise, to which God guides the people of Paradise, and another to Hell, to which God guides the people of Hell, as God says regarding the people of Paradise:

'He will guide them and improve their condition, and admit them to Paradise, which He has made known to them'".[8]

And regarding the people of Hell, He said: "So guide them to the path of Hell".[9]

It has also been said that there is a single path over Hell that everyone must cross, which is finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. The people of Paradise will cross it without experiencing fear

6. *Al-Mīzān*: 8/10-12
7. Qur'an, 19:68-71
8. Qur'an, 47:5
9. Qur'an, 37:23

or grief, while the disbelievers will cross it as a punishment and to increase their fear. When each one reaches their destination in the Fire, they will fall from that path.[10] Shaykh al-Mufīd, in explaining how the path is finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, said:

"This means that no disbeliever's foot will be stable on the path on the Day of Resurrection due to the severity of the terrors and fears of that Day. They will walk on it like one who walks on something finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. This is a metaphor for the difficulty that the disbeliever experiences in crossing the path".[11] I say: There is undoubtedly a connection between the worldly path (*ṣirāṭ*) (the divine laws that God has prescribed for His servants and guided them to) and the path of the hereafter. Following divine duties, which is traversing the worldly path, is difficult like traversing a path finer than hair and sharper than a sword. How many people have gone astray in matters of belief, worshipping their own desires, Satan and their whims instead of worshipping God and how many have failed in obedience and fulfilling divine duties.

If this is the state of the worldly path in terms of difficulty and precision, then so too is the state of the path in the hereafter. For this reason, there are numerous traditions from both groups describing how people's crossing varies according to their differences in following the worldly path. Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "People will cross the path in different categories: some will pass like lightning, some like a galloping horse, some crawling, some walking, and some hanging on, with the Fire taking something from them and leaving something".[12]

10. *Kashf al-Murād*: Sixth Purpose, Issue 14
11. *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqād*: 89
12. *Amālī al-Ṣadūq*: 107, Session 33; See: *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*: 4/291

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INTERCESSION ON THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

Intercession (*shafā'a*) in the terminology of the theologians means that God's mercy and forgiveness reaches His servants through His friends and chosen servants. The role of intercession as a means for bestowing divine mercy upon the servants is similar to that of supplication. God says:

"And if, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you and asked forgiveness of God and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God accepting of repentance and merciful".[1]

This truth becomes clear when we consider that supplication in general, and especially the supplication of the righteous, is among the effective factors in the chain of cosmic causes and effects. Thus, intercession in its technical sense relates back to cosmic intercession, meaning the effect of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) supplication in bringing divine forgiveness to the servants.

1. Qur'an, 4:46

Intercession in the Qur'an and Tradition

Intercession is mentioned in various chapters of the Wise Book for different occasions, and it has received significant attention in prophetic traditions and the narrations of the pure family. The Qur'anic verses in this regard are of several types:

The first type: Those that initially negate intercession, as in His words, glory be to Him:

"O you who believe! Spend from what We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no trading, no friendship and no intercession. And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers".[2]

The second type: Those that deny the inclusion of disbelievers in intercession. He says - relating from the disbelievers:

"And we used to deny the Day of Judgment, until certainty came to us. So no intercession of intercessors will benefit them".[3]

The third type: Those that deny the idols' capacity for intercession. He says:

"And We do not see with you your intercessors which you claimed were partners among you. Indeed, the bonds between you have been severed, and lost from you is what you used to claim".[4,5]

The fourth type: Those that deny intercession for other than Him. He says: "And warn by it those who fear that they will be gathered to their Lord - for them there is no protector and no intercessor besides Him - that they might become righteous".[6,7]

The fifth type: Those that affirm intercession for other than Him with His permission. He says: "On that Day, no intercession will benefit except [that of] one whom the Most Merciful has given permission and whose word He has approved".[8,9]

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2. Qur'an, 2:254
3. Qur'an, 74:46-48
4. Qur'an, 6:95
5. See also: Qur'an, 10:18; 30:13; 36:23; 39:43
6. Qur'an, 6:51
7. See also: Qur'an, 6:7; 32:4; 39:44
8. Qur'an, 20:109
9. See also: Qur'an, 2:255; 10:3; 19:87; 34:23; 43:86

The sixth type: Those that explain who will receive the intercession of the intercessors. He says: "And they do not intercede except for one whom He approves, and they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive".[10]

And He also says: "And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except after God has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves".[11]

This is a general overview of the verses concerning intercession. As for the tradition (*sunna*), whoever examines the authentic collections, chains of transmission, and hadith compilations will find a large collection of traditions concerning intercession that necessitate acknowledgment that it is among the established principles in Islamic law. Here are some examples:

1. The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: "Every prophet has a prayer that will be answered. Each prophet hastened to make his prayer, but I have saved my prayer as intercession for my community, and it will be granted to those among them who die without associating anything with God".[12] And he (s.a.w.) said: "I have been given five things, and I have been given intercession, which I have saved for my community, and it is for those who do not associate anything with God".[13] And he (s.a.w.) said: "Indeed, my intercession is for those of my community who commit major sins".[14] And Ali (a.s.) said: "Three will intercede with God, the Mighty and Majestic, and their intercession will be accepted: the prophets, then the scholars, then the martyrs".[15] And Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (a.s.) said: "O God, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, and

10. Qurʾan, 21:28
11. Qurʾan, 53:26
12. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 8/33 and 9/170; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 1/130
13. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 1/42 and 119; *Musnad Aḥmad*: 1/301
14. *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*: 3/376
15. *Al-Khiṣāl*, by al-Ṣadūq, Chapter of Three, Hadith 169

ennoble his edifice, magnify his proof, make heavy his scale, and accept his intercession".[16]

Absolute and Limited Intercession

Intercession can be conceived in two ways:

1. Absolute: Where the sinner benefits from intercession on the Day of Resurrection regardless of what they have done. This is rejected by both reason and revelation.
2. Limited: This is conditional upon certain requirements in the one being interceded for. The sum of these conditions is that the person must not sever all their bonds of servitude (*'ubūdiyya*) with God and their spiritual connections with the intercessors. This is what is acceptable to both reason and revelation.

This clarifies the answer to the objection raised against intercession that it encourages boldness and revives the spirit of rebellion in sinners and criminals. Such consequences would stem from the rejected absolute intercession, not from the accepted limited intercession.

The purpose of legislating intercession is the same as that of legislating repentance (*tawba*), which the community has unanimously accepted as valid. This purpose is to prevent sinners from despairing of God's mercy and to motivate them toward supplication and humble entreaty to God in hope of His mercy encompassing them. For if a criminal believed that their sin would never be forgiven, they would undoubtedly persist in committing evil acts, believing that abandoning sin would not benefit them in any way. This is unlike the case where they are certain that turning away from

16. *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*, Supplication 42. For more detail, refer to *Mafāhīm al-Qur'an*: 4/287-311 by our teacher - may his shadow be prolonged

sin will change their fate in the hereafter, as this motivates them to abandon sin and return to obedience.

The same applies to intercession. When sinners believe that God's friends may intercede on their behalf if they have not violated sacred bounds and have not reached the point of being deprived of intercession, they may then try to align their lives with the conditions of intercession so as not to be deprived of it.

Conditions for Being Included in Intercession

You have learned that the legitimate intercession is that which is limited by conditions, and you have learned the general outline of these conditions. We should mention some of these conditions in detail as they appear in the traditions:

1. Among them is not associating partners with God:

This was previously mentioned in what we quoted from the traditions of intercession.

1. Sincerity in testifying to divine unity: The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: "My intercession is for those who testify that there is no god but God with sincerity, whose heart confirms their tongue, and whose tongue confirms their heart."[17]
2. Not being an enemy of the Prophet's family (*nāṣibī*):

Imam al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Indeed a believer will intercede for their close friend unless they are an enemy of the Prophet's family (*nāṣibī*). Even if every sent prophet and near angel were to intercede for an enemy of the Prophet's family, their intercession would not be accepted."[18]

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17. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 1/36; *Musnad Aḥmad*: 2/307 and 518
18. *Thawāb al-A'māl* by al-Ṣadūq: 251

1. Not taking prayer lightly:

Imam al-Kāẓim (a.s.) said: "Our intercession will not reach those who take prayer lightly."[19]

1. Not denying the Prophet's (s.a.w.) intercession:

Imam ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (a.s.) said that the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) said: "Whoever denies the intercession of the Messenger of God will not receive it."[20]

What is the Effect of Intercession?

Among nations, both the rejected and accepted forms of intercession are intended to remove sins and lift punishment. This is also the case in Islam, as clarified by the Prophet's (s.a.w.) statement:

"I have saved my intercession for those who commit major sins from my community."[21]

However, the Muʿtazilites held that its effect is limited to raising degrees and increasing rewards, thus restricting it to the obedient. This interpretation of the verses of intercession stems from their predetermined position regarding those who commit major sins, as they ruled that such people would eternally remain in hellfire if they died without repentance. When they saw that accepting intercession as removing punishment contradicted this principle, they reinterpreted God's verses, saying that intercession's effect is only to increase reward, thereby opposing all other Muslims in this matter.[22]

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19. *Al-Kāfī*: 3/279, 6/401
20. *ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*: 2/66
21. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*: 2/537; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*: 4/45
22. See: *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*: 54; *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyya*: 148; *Anwār al-Tanzīl* by al-Bayḍāwī: 1/152; *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* by al-Rāzī: 3/56; *Majmūʿat al-Rasāʾil al-Kubrā* by Ibn Taymiyya: 1/403; *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*: 1/309

Is it Permissible to Request Intercession?

Ibn Taymiyya, followed by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb - in opposition to the entire Muslim community - held that it is not permissible to request intercession from saints in this life, nor is it permissible for a believer to say: "O Messenger of God, intercede for me on the Day of Resurrection."

Rather, they held that one may only say: "O God, allow our Prophet Muḥammad to intercede for us on the Day of Resurrection."

They supported this with the following arguments:

1. It is a type of polytheism (*shirk*), specifically polytheism in worship, and one who makes such a statement is worshipping the saint.[23] The answer to this is clear from what we previously established regarding the reality of polytheism in worship, which is that submission and humility to other than God must involve believing that entity is a deity or lord, or that divine acts, administration, and affairs have been delegated to it - not just any form of submission and humility.
2. Requesting intercession from the Prophet resembles the actions of idol worshippers who sought intercession from their false deities. God says:

"And they worship besides God that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors with God.'"[24]

Therefore, seeking intercession from other than God is worship of that other.[25] This is refuted because the criterion for judgment is not superficial similarity, but rather inner intentions and purposes. Otherwise, the ritual walking between Ṣafā and Marwa and circum-

23. *Al-Hadiyya al-Saniyya*: 42
24. Qur'an, 10:18
25. *Kashf al-Shubuhāt* by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb: 6

ambulation of the House would be polytheism, since the polytheists performed these in pre-Islamic times. These polytheists sought intercession from idols believing them to be deities or entities to whom God had delegated His acts of forgiveness and intercession.

How can this be compared to one who seeks intercession from prophets and saints as righteous servants of God? To equate these is unjust judgment and obstinate reasoning.

1. Requesting intercession from others constitutes supplication to them, and supplication to other than God is forbidden. God says:

"So do not supplicate to anyone along with God."[26]

This is refuted because not all supplication to others is forbidden, as is clear. What is forbidden is supplication that constitutes worship by believing in the divinity and lordship of the one being supplicated. The verse refers to this type, as indicated by the phrase "along with God" - meaning supplication to others on par with and at the same level as supplication to God. This is supported by God's statement - relating what they will say on the Day of Resurrection: "By God, we were indeed in clear error, when we made you equal to the Lord of the worlds."[27]

1. Seeking intercession from the dead is invalid.

This is refuted because the objection stems from not recognizing the status of saints in God's wise book. You have learned in previous chapters that the Qur'an explicitly affirms the life of many groups of martyrs and others. If the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not have life, what would be the meaning of sending peace upon him every morning and evening and in the testimony (*tashahhud*) of every prayer: "Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and God's mercy and blessings"?!

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26. Qur'an, 72:18
27. Qur'an, 26:97-98

The believers do not seek intercession from the righteous ones' physical bodies, but rather from their sacred souls that are alive with God in their intermediate (*barzakhī*) bodies.

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NULLIFICATION AND EXPIATION

Nullification (*iḥbāṭ*) in language means invalidation; it is said: "the disbeliever's deed was nullified," meaning it was invalidated. Expiation (*takfīr*) means covering; the farmer is called a coverer (*kāfir*) because he covers the seed with earth. God says: "Like the rain whose vegetation pleases the tillers".[1]

Disbelief (*kufr*) is the opposite of faith, named so because it covers the truth.[2] The meaning of nullification in theological terminology is the forfeiture of reward for good deeds due to subsequent sin, just as expiation means the removal of previous sins through subsequent obedience.

The theologians differed on this matter. A group of Mu'tazilites affirmed both nullification and expiation, while the investigators denied them both. Those who affirmed them also differed among themselves. Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī said that the later deed cancels the earlier one and remains in effect, while Abū Hāshim said that the lesser is nullified by the greater, and from the greater is nullified what

1. Qur'an, 57:20
2. *Mu'jam al-Maqāyīs fi al-Lugha*: 2/129, entry "ḥabaṭa"; and 5/191, entry "kafara"

equals the lesser, with the excess remaining deserved – this is called balancing (*muwāzana*).[3]

The first position is invalidated because it necessitates injustice, for one who does evil and good deeds, if their evil exceeds their good, would be equal to one who did no good at all. If their good exceeds their evil, they would be equal to one who did no evil at all. And if the two are equal, they would be equal to one who did neither – this is not acceptable to rational people.[4] It also contradicts God's words:

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it".[5]

Abū Hāshim's position is refuted by what al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī mentioned, saying: "Due to the lack of priority when the latter is double, and the occurrence of contradictories with equality".[6]

To clarify: if we suppose that someone deserves five portions of reward and ten portions of punishment, there is no reason why one of the two fives of punishment should be cancelled by the five portions of reward rather than the other five. Either both must be cancelled, which contradicts his doctrine, or nothing is cancelled, which is what we maintain. And if we suppose that someone performs deeds worth five portions of reward and five portions of punishment, if the cancellation of one precedes the other, the remaining cannot be cancelled by what is already nullified, as it is impossible for what is nullified and overcome to become dominant and effective. If they occur simultaneously, they must both exist, because the existence of each negates the existence of the other, necessitating their existence at the time of their non-existence, which combines contradictories.[7]

If you say: If nullification is invalid, then what is the solution regarding what indicates the nullification of deeds in various verses

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3. *Kashf al-Murād*, Sixth Purpose, Issue 7
4. Same source
5. Qur'an, 99:7-8
6. *Kashf al-Murād*: Sixth Purpose, Issue 7
7. See the previous source regarding *Tawḍīḥ al-Dalīl* by al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī.

that state that disbelief, apostasy, polytheism, offense against the Prophet, and other things nullify good deeds?

I say: Those who maintain the invalidity of nullification explain these verses by saying that the deserving of reward in these cases was conditional upon the non-occurrence of disobedience after acts of obedience.

It can be said that the deservingness at the initial occurrence of acts of obedience was not conditional upon the non-occurrence of disobedience, but rather its establishment and continuation were conditional upon the non-occurrence of disobedience.

Al-Ṭabrisī said in his exegesis of God's words: "And whoever disbelieves in faith, his work has become worthless, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers".[8]

Regarding the phrase "his work has become worthless," there is evidence here that the nullification of deeds does not depend on the establishment of reward, for the disbeliever has no deed for which reward has been established. Rather, he has deeds that outwardly would have deserved reward were it not for his disbelief. Thus, God Almighty expressed this deed as being nullified, which is its true meaning.[9] Through what al-Ṭabrisī mentioned, the answer to another question becomes clear: if deservingness is conditional upon the non-occurrence of disobedience, how can it be called nullification, since nullification is invalidation and removal, and there was nothing there to invalidate or remove?

This is because the deed itself is outwardly a cause and requirement. Invalidation and removal apply both with the existence of the complete cause and with the existence of the requirement, which is part of the cause.

All this pertains to nullification. As for expiation, it is not considered injustice because punishment is the right of the Master, and waiving a right is not injustice but rather beneficence. Breaking a threat is not rationally repugnant; what is repugnant is breaking a

8. Qur'an, 5:5

9. *Majma' al-Bayān*: 3-4/163, see also p. 207, exegesis of verse 50 of Sūrat al-Mā'ida.

promise. Therefore, there is no need to restrict the deservingness of punishment or its continuation to the non-occurrence of acts of obedience. Rather, it is established, but the Glorified Master pardons His servant for the acts of obedience performed.

The Glorified said:

"If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance".[10,11]

Furthermore, it is not correct to affirm nullification and expiation for all deeds; rather, one must follow the texts and restrict oneself to them in this matter.

10. Qur'an, 4:31
11. Similar in meaning are verse 29 of Sūrat al-Anfāl and verse 2 of Sūrat Muḥammad.

61

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

We conclude our discussions of resurrection by answering questions raised in this field:

1. How Can Humans Be Eternal in the Hereafter When Matter Perishes?

Verses and narrations indicate the eternality of humans in the Hereafter, either in its paradise and bliss, or in its hell and torment, even though scientific laws have shown that matter, according to the explosion of its energies over long periods, reaches a point where its energy is depleted. Therefore, paradise and hell cannot endure, and humans cannot be eternal.

The answer is that this question arises from comparing the Hereafter to this world, which is a grave error, because scientific experiments do not extend their results beyond worldly matter. Applying the laws of this world to the other world, even if it is material, is an analogy without evidence. The Hereafter has its own laws that cannot be compared to the laws of this existence. The Glorified says: "The

Day when the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [likewise]".[1]

ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī says:

It is certain that the reality of the earth and heavens and what is in them will remain the same on that Day, but the system operating in them will be different from the system operating in them in this world.[2] God's will has decreed the eternality of paradise, hell, and the life of the Hereafter, and He has the power to bestow energy, one bestowal after another, upon the otherworldly realm. This is expressed in the words of the Glorified: "Every time their skins are roasted through, We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, God is ever Exalted in Might and Wise".[3]

2. What is the Purpose of Punishing the Criminal?

The wise one only punishes for a purpose, and the purpose of punishment is either satisfaction as in retribution against the criminal, which is impossible for God, or disciplining the criminal or serving as a lesson for others. These two purposes are specific to worldly existence, so punishing the criminal in the Hereafter would be futile.

The answer to this is that the occurrence of resurrection is among the necessities of reason, and one of its purposes is the complete realization of divine justice regarding those who are accountable, which depends on punishing criminals and rewarding the obedient. "Should We treat those who submit (to Us) the same as the criminals? What is wrong with your judgment?"[4]

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1. Qur'an, 14:48
2. *Al-Mīzān*: 12/93
3. Qur'an, 4:56
4. Qur'an, 68:35-36

3. Is Pardoning the Wrongdoer Permissible?

The answer is affirmative, because punishment is a right of the Glorified Lord and He may waive His right. This is permissible when divine wisdom requires it and there is no impediment.

The Mu'tazilites of Baghdad disagreed with this, not allowing pardon for sinners on rational grounds, citing two arguments:

First: "When the accountable person knows that they will certainly receive the punishment they deserve in every case, they will be more likely to perform obligations and avoid major sins".[5] The observation on this is that if this argument were valid, it would necessitate closing the door of repentance, as one could say that if the accountable person knows their repentance will not be accepted, they would be closer to obedience and further from disobedience.

Furthermore, hope has constructive effects in human life, while despair has negative effects in perpetuating destructive behaviors. For this reason, the wise revelation came with both encouragement and warning together.

Moreover, the discussion concerns the permissibility of pardon, not its inevitability, and the negative effect - even if we accept it - follows from the latter, not the former.

Second: God has promised punishment for those who commit major sins, so if He did not punish them, this would necessitate breaking His promise and falsehood in His statement, both of which are impossible.[6] The answer is that breaking a promise of reward is reprehensible, unlike breaking a promise of punishment. The proof for this is that every rational person considers pardoning after a threat of punishment to be praiseworthy in certain circumstances. The reason for this is that a threat of punishment, unlike a promise of reward, does not establish a right for others. Rather, the threat is only a right for the one making the threat, and they may waive their right. Truth and falsehood are properties of statements, not of performative

5. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*: 646
6. *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-'Aḍudiyya*, by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī: 2/194

utterances, and a threat is performative, not declarative, so falsehood does not apply to it.

4. Are Paradise and Hell Already Created?

The theologians differed on this matter. The majority held that they are already created, while most Mu'tazilites, Khārijites, and a group of Zaydīs held the opposite view. Shaykh al-Mufīd said:

"Paradise and Hell are currently created, and this is supported by reports and the consensus of the people of religious law and traditions. The Mu'tazilites, Khārijites, and a group of Zaydīs disagreed with this view. Most of those we mentioned claimed that what we said about their creation falls under the category of the possible rather than the necessary, and they suspended judgment on the traditions concerning this. The rest of them declared their creation impossible".[7]

Those who maintain that they are created cite verses indicating that Paradise is prepared for the God-fearing and Hell is prepared for the disbelievers.[8]

Sayyid al-Radi suggests in *Haqa'iq al-Ta'wil* that God uses the past tense in this verse to signify the certainty with which this will occur[9], and there are other examples of this in the Qur'an.

I say: Among what indicates that Paradise is created is God's statement: "And he certainly saw him in another descent, at the Lote Tree of the Ultimate Boundary, near which is the Garden of Refuge."

The description of something that will be realized tomorrow is not expressed with a nominal sentence. Furthermore, there are abundant explicit traditions stating that Paradise and Hell are created, so it is not possible to deviate from them.

Those who deny their creation argue with several points:

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7. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*: 141-142, second edition; see also: *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/108, and *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Qūshjī: 507
8. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 167
9. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*: 141-142, second edition; see also: *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/108, and *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* by al-Qūshjī: 507

The creation of Paradise and Hell before the Day of Recompense is futile.

The response to this is that judging something as futile depends on definitive knowledge that no purpose is arranged upon it, and how do we have knowledge of this? It is possible to count this among the instances of His grace, as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Lāhījī indicated.

If they were created, they would perish according to God's statement: "Everything will perish except His Face." [10]

The consequent is false due to consensus on their permanence, and due to texts testifying to the permanence of Paradise's provisions and shade.

The response to this is that the meaning of "perishing" is not the actual non-existence of everything and the nullification of its existence, but rather that everything is perishing in itself and false in its essence. This is based on understanding "perishing" in the verse as referring to the present. However, if it refers to the future - based on the view that the active participle typically indicates the future - then the perishing of things does not mean absolute nullification after existence leaving no trace, for the verses of the Qur'an explicitly state that everything returns to God. Rather, the intended meaning of perishing in this sense is the transformation of the mode of existence and the transition from this world to the Hereafter. This applies specifically to what has worldly existence governed by its laws, so the otherworldly Paradise and Hell are excluded from the meaning of the verse by specification.

The objection has been answered by denying the necessity of the connection, and interpreting the permanence of its food and shade to mean their continuance after their existence and the entry of the accountable beings into them.[11]

10. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 167
11. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 168

5. Where are Paradise and Hell Located?

The prevalent view among theologians is that Paradise is above the heavens, beneath the Throne, and that Hell is beneath the earths.[12] Adhering to this view is problematic due to the absence of explicit or apparent evidence for it. Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī said:

"The truth is that we do not know their location. One might deduce the location of Paradise from God's words: 'Near it is the Garden of Refuge'[13] meaning near the *Sidrat al-Muntahā*.[14] Yes, one might perhaps understand from God's words: 'And in the heaven is your provision and what you are promised'[15]

that Paradise is in heaven, since the apparent meaning of 'what you are promised' refers to Paradise".[16] All of this is based on the view that Paradise and Hell, according to the apparent meanings of scripture, exist externally regardless of the actions of the accountable beings, and that they are prepared for the obedient and the disobedient. However, according to the view that the reality of Paradise and Hell is the embodiment of human actions in beautiful and pleasant or ugly and frightening forms, Paradise and Hell exist in reality in their appropriate form in the Hereafter, even though most people, being surrounded by worldly circumstances, are unable to see them. Otherwise, actions, whether good or bad, have already been realized and have two existences and manifestations, each existing in its own sphere.

6. Who Will Remain Eternally in Hell?

The theologians differed regarding those who will remain eternally in Hell. The majority of Muslims held that eternal residence is specific to the disbeliever and not the Muslim, even if they are sinful,

12. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/111
13. Qur'an, 53:15
14. *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*: 395
15. Qur'an, 51:22
16. *Al-Mīzān*: 18/375

while the Khārijites and Mu'tazilites held that those who commit major sins will remain eternally if they die without repentance.[17] Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Baḥrānī said: "The accountable disobedient person is either a disbeliever or not. As for the disbeliever, most of the community agrees that they will remain eternally in Hell. As for one who is not a disbeliever, if their sin is major, some in the community definitively ruled against their punishment - these are the pure Murji'ites. Others definitively ruled for their punishment - these are the Mu'tazilites and Khārijites. Others did not make a definitive ruling about their punishment, either because their sin did not warrant punishment according to the Ash'arites, or because while they deserve punishment, God may pardon them, and this is the chosen view".[18] Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī argued for the finite nature of punishment for those who commit major sins with two points, saying:

"The punishment of one who commits a major sin will end because they deserve reward for their faith and because [eternal punishment] is considered repugnant by rational people.

To clarify: The one who commits a major sin deserves reward and Paradise for their faith. So when they deserve punishment for disobedience, either the reward must precede the punishment - which is invalid because reward can only occur through entering Paradise, and one who enters it remains eternally according to the explicit text of the Glorious Book and the consensus of the community - or vice versa, which is what we maintain.

Furthermore, if punishment were unending, it would mean that someone who worshipped God throughout their life with various acts of devotion, then disobeyed once at the end of their life while maintaining their faith, would remain eternally in Hell - equivalent to one who associated partners with God throughout their life. This is rationally repugnant and impossible for God, glory be to Him.[19] The Mu'tazilites argued for the eternal residence of the sinful person

17. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*: 53
18. *Qawā'id al-Marām*: 160
19. See: *Kashf al-Murād*, objective 6, issue 8

in Hell based on the absolute nature of verses concerning eternity, but one who reflects on these verses finds evidence preventing such absolute interpretation, which we need not discuss here.[20]

7. How Can Eternal Punishment be Justified When the Sin was Finite?

One of the established rational principles is maintaining proportionality between crime and punishment. This proportionality is absent in eternal punishment, since the sin was temporary and finite.

The answer to this is, firstly: The intended proportionality between crime and punishment is not quantitative or temporal, but rather qualitative, considering the magnitude of the crime in terms of its individual or societal harm. We see this in punishments established by rational people for things like murder and disruption of social order, where the crime occurs in a brief moment yet may be punished by execution or life imprisonment.

Secondly: "The punishment is actually the effect of the form of wretchedness that results after the realization of preparatory causes, which are the specific acts of disobedience. It is not an effect of those limited and finite causes, which would necessitate the impossible situation of a finite cause producing an infinite effect. This is analogous to how limited preparatory causes and numbered preliminaries necessitate that matter takes on human form, becoming a human who produces human effects that result from the aforementioned form."

There is no merit in the objection:"Human effects that emanate from humans after death continue eternally and perpetually due to limited preparatory causes that are finite for matter. So how can a finite collection of causes result in the emanation of the aforementioned effects and their eternal persistence with humans?" This is

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20. For more on this see: *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*: 2/906-911 first edition; and *Manshūr-i Jāvīd*: vol. 9, chapter 26, which is a thematic interpretation of the Holy Qur'an by our teacher - may his shadow be prolonged - (in Persian)

because their efficient cause - which is the human form - exists with them eternally according to the premise. Just as this question is meaningless, so too is the other one.[21]

21. *Al-Mīzān*: 1/415

PART IX

CONCLUDING DISCUSSIONS

62

FAITH AND ITS RULINGS

Up to this point, we have examined the correct Islamic beliefs, supported by proofs from the Qur'an, tradition, and reason. What remains is discussion of certain matters with which we conclude our doctrinal investigations.

Faith (*īmān*) comes from security (*amn*) and has two closely related meanings in language: First, trust (*amāna*) which is the opposite of betrayal, meaning tranquility of heart. Second, affirmation (*taṣdīq*), and these two meanings are closely related.[1]

As for its religious meaning, there are different views regarding the nature of faith - whether it is only an act of the heart, only a verbal declaration, both of these together, or both of these along with the actions of all bodily limbs. And according to the first view, is it knowledge alone or knowledge combined with the heart's submission?

The Karrāmiyya are said to have defined faith as verbal declaration alone, citing as evidence the saying of the Prophet (s.a.w.): "I have been commanded to fight people until they say: 'There is no god but

1. *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lugha*: 1/133

God, Muhammad is the Messenger of God'".[2] This was refuted by explaining that the meaning of "saying" in his words "until they say" refers to submission and faith, as it is common to use "saying" to mean belief and submission. Additionally, faith is a matter of the heart that needs manifestation, which is usually verbal declaration. You will see that many texts explicitly indicate that faith is an act of the heart.

The Mu'tazilites and Khārijites held that bodily actions are constitutive of faith and one who lacks them is not a believer at all. However, they differed: the Khārijites considered such a person an unbeliever, while the Mu'tazilites said they are neither a believer nor an unbeliever but in a position between the two positions. Among their evidence was God's saying:

"And God would not let your faith go to waste".[3]

For the meaning of faith (*īmān*) in this verse refers to their prayers toward Jerusalem before its abrogation.

This was refuted by explaining that usage is more general than literal meaning, and there is no doubt that action is an effect of faith. It is common to apply the name of the cause to the effect. The evidence for this lies in the numerous verses indicating that faith is an act of the heart and that action branches from it, as will be explained.

Some theologians held that faith is composed of both submission of the heart and verbal declaration. This is the view chosen by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ṭūsī in *Tajrīd al-'Aqā'id* and al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī in *Nahj al-Mustarshidīn*. Al-Taftāzānī attributed this view to many scholars and said it is what is reported from Abū Ḥanīfa.[4] They cited as evidence God's saying:

"They rejected them, though their souls were certain of them, out of wickedness and pride".[5]

This was answered by explaining that the verse indicates they

2. Narrated by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: 1/53
3. Qur'an, 2:143
4. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/178
5. Qur'an, 27:14

knew the truth and were certain of it, yet despite this they did not believe or submit to it out of wickedness and pride. This is similar to God's saying:

"So when there came to them what they recognized, they rejected it".[6]

This verse and similar ones indicate that knowledge alone is not the faith (*īmān*) required by religious law, but rather requires submission of the heart, and verbal denial and the like reveal its lack of realization.

From this, the invalidity becomes clear of those who explained faith as merely knowledge, which has been attributed to Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128 AH/746 CE) and to Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī in one of his two opinions.[7] The commentator of *al-Mawāqif* attributed this to some jurists.[8] The majority of Ashʿarites held that faith is affirmation with the heart. The author of *al-Mawāqif* said:

"According to us and most scholars like al-Qāḍī and al-Ustādh, it is affirming the Messenger in what is necessarily known to have come from him - in detail for what is known in detail, and in general for what is known in general".[9] Al-Taftāzānī said after relating this doctrine: "This is the well-known view, and the majority follow it".[10] Al-Fāḍil al-Miqdād said:

"Some of our Imami and Ashʿari companions said: It is only affirmation of the heart, and this was chosen by Ibn Nawbakht and Kamāl al-Dīn Maytham in his *Qawāʿid*, and it is closest to what we said about it being linguistically affirmation, and due to its attribution to the heart, we know that what is meant is affirmation of the heart, not just any affirmation... And verbal declaration serves to manifest it, while righteous deeds are its confirming fruits".[11] This view is correct and is supported by three groups of verses:

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6. Qur'an, 2:89
7. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/176-177; *Irshād al-Ṭālibīn*: 439
8. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/323
9. *Al-Mawāqif fī ʿIlm al-Kalām*: 384
10. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/177
11. *Irshād al-Ṭālibīn*: 442

First: Those that count faith among the attributes of the heart and make the heart its location, such as God's saying:

"These are they in whose hearts He has written faith".[12]

And His saying: "Faith has not yet entered your hearts".[13]

And His saying: "While his heart is at rest with faith".[14]

Second: Those that conjoin righteous deeds with faith, for the apparent meaning of conjunction is that what is conjoined is other than what it is conjoined to, and the verses with this meaning are beyond enumeration.

Third: The verses about sealing and stamping, like God's saying: "These are they upon whose hearts God has set a seal".[15]

And His saying: "God has set a seal upon their hearts".[16]

Careful consideration of these verses establishes that faith (*īmān*) is affirmation of the heart, which results in both worldly and otherworldly effects. As for the worldly effect, it is the inviolability of one's life, honor, and property, unless one commits murder or an immoral act.

As for the otherworldly effect, it is the validity of one's deeds, deserving reward for them, avoiding eternal residence in hellfire, and being worthy of pardon and intercession at certain stages.

Furthermore, otherworldly happiness depends on faith accompanied by action, which is not doubted by anyone familiar with religious law and the verses and traditions concerning action. From this, the invalidity of the Murji'ite doctrine becomes clear, which claimed that action has no value in religious life and that faith alone is sufficient. The Imams of the Household (a.s.) were united in cursing the Murji'ites.[17] Al-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said:

"Cursed, cursed is the one who says faith is speech without

12. Qur'an, 58:22
13. Qur'an, 49:12
14. Qur'an, 16:106
15. Qur'an, 16:108
16. Qur'an, 2:7
17. See: *Al-Wāfī*, by al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī: 3/46, chapters on disbelief and polytheism, chapter on types of people

action".[18] From what we have mentioned, it becomes clear that the traditions reporting that faith consists of knowledge in the heart, declaration by the tongue, and action by the limbs[19] do not aim to explain the reality of faith, but rather indicate that faith without action is not sufficient for human attainment of happiness, and that the Murji'ite claim has no foundation. This is what is required to reconcile these traditions with the verses mentioned earlier.

We ask God to make us among His righteous believing servants, about whom He said:

"Whoever does evil shall only be recompensed with its like, while whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer - these shall enter Paradise, wherein they shall be provided for without measure".[20]

18. *Al-Biḥār*: 66/19
19. *Sunan Ibn Māja*: vol. 1, chapter on faith, hadith 65; *Khiṣāl al-Ṣadūq*: chapter on three, hadith 207; *Nahj al-Balāgha*: wisdom 227; *Biḥār al-Anwār*: 69/18, chapter 30
20. Qur'an, 40:40

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THE SHI'A AND BASELESS ACCUSATIONS

There are certain issues for which the Imami Shi'a continue to be disparaged or accused of believing in, namely: belief in divine alteration (*badā'*), return (*raj'a*), temporary marriage (*mut'a*), not believing in the universal righteousness of all Companions, dissimulation (*taqiyya*), and the alleged claim of Qur'anic distortion.

We have already discussed divine alteration in the section on divine justice, and return in the section on resurrection. The discussion of temporary marriage belongs to jurisprudence.[1] Let us now examine the remaining three issues:

The Shi'i Position on the Qur'an

The Shi'a have been accused by some opponents of claiming that the Qur'an has been distorted and is incomplete. However, examining the statements of the community's greatest scholars and leaders

1. For more on this, refer to the book *Al-I'tiṣām bil-Kitāb wal-Sunna* by our teacher, Shaykh Jafar Sobhani.

proves otherwise. Here are the texts of some of their prominent scholars.[2] Al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH/991 CE) said:

"Our belief is that the Qur'an which God the Exalted revealed to His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is what is between the two covers, and it is what is in people's hands, not more than that. Whoever attributes to us that we say it is more than that is a liar."[3]

Al-Murtaḍā (d. 436 AH/1045 CE) said:

"The Qur'an is the miracle of prophethood and the source of religious sciences and rulings. Muslim scholars have reached the utmost degree in preserving and protecting it, to the extent that they know everything that differs in its grammar, recitation, letters, and verses. So how could it be altered or incomplete, given such sincere care and strict preservation?"[4]

The leader of the community, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH/1068 CE) said:

"There is consensus that any addition to it is false, and as for reduction from it, the apparent position of Muslims is also against this. This is most fitting with the correct view of our school, which was supported by al-Murtaḍā, and it is evident from the narrations."[5]

Amīn al-Islām al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548 AH/1153 CE) said:

"As for addition, there is consensus on its falsity, and as for reduction, while some of our companions and certain superficial Sunnis have narrated that there is reduction in the Qur'an, the correct view of our school is contrary to this."[6]

Al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726 AH/1326 CE) said:

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2. They have numerous arguments refuting the claim of distortion that would take too long to mention. For more on this, refer to the introduction of *Tafsīr Ālāʾ al-Raḥmān* by ʿAllāma al-Balāghī; *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* by ʿAllāma al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī: 12/106-137; *Tafsīr al-Bayān* by Muḥaqqiq al-Khūʾī: 215-254; *Iẓhār al-Ḥaqq* by ʿAllāma al-Hindī: 2/128; and *Ṣiyānat al-Qurʾan ʿan al-Taḥrīf* by Professor Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifa, for these contain sufficient information for the seeker of truth.

3. *Al-Iʿtiqādāt fī Dīn al-Imāmiyya*: 59, Chapter 33, Chapter on the Belief Regarding the Extent of the Qur'an.

4. *Al-Masāʾil al-Ṭarābulusiyyāt*

5. *Tafsīr al-Tibyān*: 1/3

6. *Majmaʿ al-Bayān*, Introduction

"The truth is that there is no alteration, no postponement, no advancement, and nothing has been added or reduced. We seek refuge in God from believing such things, for it would cast doubt on the Prophet's miracle that has been transmitted through continuous succession."[7]

These are a group of Shi'i scholars from previous centuries, from the fourth to the eighth, and this is sufficient to prove that attributing distortion to the Shi'a is unjust and hostile. As for later scholars, there is much to say, and we will suffice with quoting the words of the great teacher Ayatollah Khomeini in this regard, where he said:

"Anyone who is aware of the Muslims' care in collecting, preserving, and maintaining the Qur'an, both in recitation and writing, will recognize the falsity of this claim (of distortion) and that no person of sound mind should rely on it. The reports concerning it range from weak ones that cannot be used as evidence, to fabricated ones showing clear signs of forgery, to strange ones that provoke wonder, to authentic ones that indicate their content is about the exegesis and explanation of the Qur'an."[8]

Indeed, ignorance of this and failure to distinguish between the Qur'an's explanation (*ta'wīl*) and its revelation (*tanzīl*) led some to claim distortion. Al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH/1022 CE) said:

"A group of Imami scholars have said that not a word, verse, or chapter was reduced, but what was removed was what had been recorded in the manuscript of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) regarding its explanation (*ta'wīl*) and the exegesis of its meanings according to the reality of its revelation (*tanzīl*). This was established and revealed, even though it was not part of God's speech which is the miraculous Qur'an. The explanation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'an may be called Qur'an." He continued: "In my view, this position is more plausible than the claim of actual reduction of words from the

7. *Ajwibat al-Masā'il al-Muhannā'iyya*: Question 13
8. *Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl*: 2/165

Qur'an itself rather than its explanation (*ta'wīl*), and I lean towards this view, and I ask God for guidance to what is correct."[9]

Reports of Reduction in Sunni Books

The reports of reduction are not limited to Shi'i hadith - and you have known the correct view regarding them - but there are also numerous reports in Sunni books of exegesis and hadith indicating the reduction of some verses and chapters. Here is al-Qurṭubī saying in his exegesis of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*:

"Abū 'Ubayd in *al-Faḍā'il*, Ibn Mardawayh, and Ibn al-Anbārī reported from 'Ā'isha who said: '*Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* used to be recited during the Prophet's time as two hundred verses, but when 'Uthmān wrote the manuscripts, he could only find what is present now.'"[10]

And here is al-Bukhārī reporting from 'Umar his statement: "Were it not that people would say 'Umar has added to God's Book, I would have written the verse of stoning with my own hand."[11]

There are other such reports, some of which al-Suyūṭī transmitted in *al-Itqān*.[12] Nevertheless, we respect Sunni scholars and their researchers too much to attribute the belief in distortion to them, and it is not correct to use narrations as evidence for doctrine. We say the same regarding the Shi'a, and you have known that Shaykh al-Mufīd interprets these reports as being explanations of the Qur'an. Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā also has a discussion about explaining what has been reported concerning the abrogation of recitation in Sunni reports, which we will quote verbatim. He said:

Not every revelation is Qur'an, for the Qur'an has specific rules and characteristics. Many rulings have come in the Sunna attributed to revelation, yet neither the Prophet (s.a.w.) nor his companions considered them Qur'an. Indeed, everything he (a.s.) said as religion is considered revelation according to the majority, and they used as

9. *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*: Chapter 81, 59
10. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*: 14/113; See also: *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*: 5/180
11. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 9/69, Chapter on Testimony Before a Judge in Judicial Authority
12. *Al-Itqān*: 2/30

evidence his saying: "He does not speak from desire. It is nothing but revelation revealed." This is most evident in the divine traditions (*aḥādīth qudsiyya*).

Those scholars who did not understand this distinction fell into misconceptions regarding some hadith, both in narration and understanding, and claimed that these were Qur'an that was abrogated."[13]

The Shi'i Position on the Moral Rectitude of the Companions

The rectitude of all companions and their immunity from all wrongdoing is one of the principles that Sunnis hold as a matter of religious doctrine. Ibn Ḥajar said:

"The People of the Sunna have agreed that all [companions] are just, and none disagreed with this except some deviants among the innovators."[14]

And al-Ījī said:

"It is obligatory to honor all companions and refrain from criticizing them, because God honored them and praised them in multiple places in His Book, and the Messenger loved them and praised them in many hadith."[15]

And al-Taftāzānī said:

"The people of truth have agreed on the obligation to honor the companions and refrain from criticizing them, especially the emigrants (*muhājirīn*) and helpers (*anṣār*), due to what has come in the Qur'an and Sunna regarding their praise."[16] However, the Imami Shi'a unanimously hold that the companions are like other narrators - among them are the just and the unjust, and that being a companion is not sufficient to judge someone as just. Rather, one must investigate their circumstances until their reliability is established. This is because claiming the justice of all companions and

13. *Tafsīr al-Manār*: 1/414, Commentary
14. *Al-Iṣāba*: 1/17
15. *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*: 8/373
16. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/303

their immunity from everything does not align with the Qur'an and Sunna and is contradicted by history. Here is the explanation:

The Companions in the Qur'an

The Qur'an categorizes the companions into different groups, praising some while criticizing others. Those who are praised are the early forerunners[17], those who pledged allegiance under the tree[18], and the emigrants and helpers.[19] As for those who are criticized, they are of various types, of which we mention some:

1. The Hypocrites: The Qur'an gave special attention to the group of hypocrites, revealing their intentions and denouncing them in the following chapters: *Sūrat al-Baqara*, *Āl ʿImrān*, *al-Mā ʾida*, *al-Tawba*, *al-ʿAnkabūt*, *al-Aḥzāb*, *Muḥammad*, *al-Fatḥ*, *al-Ḥadīd*, *al-Mujādila*, *al-Ḥashr*, and *al-Munāfiqūn*. This indicates that they were a huge group within Islamic society.
2. The Doubters and Listeners: God relates that a group of the Prophet's companions would seek permission to avoid participating in jihad, describing them as having doubt in their hearts, and that their participation in jihad would only increase the Muslims in confusion, and that they would listen to the disbelievers.[20]
3. Those Who Thought Wrongly About God: God relates that a group of the Prophet's companions would think wrongly about God with thoughts of ignorance, as they doubted that the Muslims were on the right path and said: "If we had any say in the matter, we would not have been killed here."[21]

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17. See: Qur'an, 9:100
18. See: Qur'an, 48:18
19. See: Qur'an, 59:8
20. See: Qur'an, 9:45-47
21. Qur'an, 3:154

4. Those Who Fled From the Disbelievers: It can be understood from some verses, and history bears witness, that a group of the Prophet's companions were defeated in battle against the disbelievers on the days of Uḥud and Ḥunayn. Ibn Hishām said in his exegesis of the verses revealed about Uḥud:

Then He reproached them for fleeing from their Prophet while he was calling them, and they would not turn back to his call, saying: "When you were running away without even casting a side-glance at anyone, while the Messenger was calling you from your rear."[22]

And he said regarding the defeat of people on the day of Ḥunayn:

When the people were defeated and the uncouth people of Mecca who were with the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) saw the defeat, some men among them spoke what was in their hearts of hatred. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb said, "Their defeat will not end until they reach the sea," and Jabala ibn Ḥanbal shouted, "Today the magic has been nullified."[23] These are types of companions whom the Qur'an denounced and reproached for their blameworthy actions and disgraceful characteristics. After this, is it correct to consider all companions as just and pious, and to accuse those who criticize these individuals of heresy and innovation? This is especially so when God Himself described a group of them (the listeners) as wrongdoers.

The Companions in the Prophetic Tradition

Abū Ḥāzim narrated from Sahl ibn Sa'd who said that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "I will precede you to the Pool. Whoever comes to it will drink, and whoever drinks will never thirst again. Some people whom I know and who know me will come to me, but then a barrier will be placed between me and them..." Abū Ḥāzim said: al-Nu'mān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh heard me narrating this tradition and asked: "Is this

22. Qur'an, 3:153
23. *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*: 3/114 and 4/444

how you heard Sahl say it?" I said: "Yes." He said: "I bear witness that I heard Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī add to it, saying: 'They are from me,' and He (the Prophet) will say: 'You do not know what they innovated after you.' So I will say: 'Away, away with those who changed after me.' This was reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim."[24] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim also reported that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said:

"On the Day of Resurrection, a group of my companions (or he said 'from my community') will come to me but will be driven away from the Pool. I will say: 'O Lord, my companions!' He will say: 'You have no knowledge of what they innovated after you. They turned back on their heels.'"[25] We have sufficed with little from much, and whoever wants to know what we have not mentioned should refer to *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl* by Ibn al-Athīr.

History and the Justice of the Companions

How can all companions be considered just when history is before us? We see that some of them, like al-Walīd ibn 'Uqba, showed clear sinfulness during the Prophet's life and after it. As for the first instance, it is unanimously agreed upon among scholars that the verse "If a sinful person comes to you with news, verify it"[26] refers to him.

The verse "If a sinful person comes to you with news, verify it" was revealed about him, as was the divine saying: "Is one who is a believer like one who is defiantly disobedient? They are not equal."[27]

As for the second instance, the historians and biographers reported that al-Walīd became drunk and led the morning prayer for the people of Kufa, performing four units of prayer. Then he turned to them and said: "Shall I add more?"[28] And there is Qudāma ibn Maẓ'ūn, a companion who fought at Badr - it is reported that he

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24. *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*: 11/120, Hadith number 7972
25. Same source: Hadith 7973
26. Qur'an, 49:6
27. Qur'an, 32:18. See: *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*: 21/62; and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*: 3/452
28. See: *Al-Kāmil* by Ibn al-Athīr: 3/105-107; *Usd al-Ghāba*: 5/91

drank wine and 'Umar implemented the prescribed punishment on him.[29] He did not waive the punishment on the grounds that Qudāma had fought at Badr, nor did he say that the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) had forbidden mentioning the companions' misdeeds. Similarly, it is well-known[30] that 'Abd al-Raḥmān the younger, son of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, drank wine and 'Umar implemented the prescribed punishment on him, which led to his death. He was among those who lived during the time of the Messenger of God (s.a.w.).

Some companions stained the earth with blood. Read the history of Busr ibn Arṭāt, who went so far as to kill two children of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abbās. How many companions like these were there among the companions who spread corruption and mischief? History is full of records of their misdeeds. After all these clear proofs, is it correct to claim the absolute justice of all companions?

A passing glance at the history of the companions shows that some accused others of hypocrisy and lying.[31] Some fought against others and led armies to battle them, resulting in many deaths. Is it possible to justify the actions of both the insulter and the insulted, the killer and the killed, and consider them all just and exemplars of virtue and excellence?

The Tradition "My Companions are Like Stars"

Those who claim the justice of all companions rely on what is narrated from the Prophet (s.a.w.) that he said: "My companions are like stars - whichever of them you follow, you will be guided."[32]

I say: How can this tradition be authentically attributed to the Messenger of God (s.a.w.) when it necessitates commanding contradictory things? For this would mean that the people of Syria at Ṣiffīn

29. *Usd al-Ghāba*: 4/199; and other biographical works
30. Same source: 3/312
31. See regarding this: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: 5/188, in the interpretation of Sūrat al-Nūr, the dispute between Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh and Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda in the matter of *ifk*
32. *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*: 9/410, Book of Virtues, Hadith 6359

were guided, and that the people of Iraq were also guided, and that the killer of ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir was guided, when it is authentically reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said to him: "The transgressing party will kill you."

And God says: "Fight against the one that transgresses until it returns to the command of God."[33]

This indicates that as long as they are characterized by transgression, they are departing from God's command, and whoever departs from God's command cannot be guided.

This tradition is fabricated and falsely attributed to the Noble Prophet, as declared by a group of Sunni scholars. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī said: "This is a fabricated tradition that is not authentic in any way from the Messenger of God." He then quoted the words of al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥazm in his treatise *Ibṭāl al-Raʾy wa-l-Qiyās* which states: "This is a false and invalid report that has never been authenticated."

He then quoted al-Bazzāz, author of the *Musnad*, who said: "This statement is not authentic from the Prophet (s.a.w.)," and he began criticizing its chain of transmission.[34] Although al-Taftāzānī was influenced by partisanship in calling for abstaining from discussing the transgressors and oppressors, he nevertheless revealed the truth when he said:

"What occurred between the companions in terms of wars and conflicts, as recorded in history books and mentioned by reliable sources, indicates on the surface that some of them deviated from the path of truth and reached the level of oppression and transgression... However, the scholars, due to their good opinion of the companions, mentioned suitable justifications and interpretations for these actions..."[35]

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33. Qur'an, 49:9
34. See all of this in: *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*: 5/528
35. *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*: 5/310.

A Word from Some Contemporary Sunni Scholars

One of the fair-minded contemporary Egyptian scholars[36] acknowledged the truth and attempted to reconcile the views of Sunnis and Shi'is regarding the companions, saying:

"The methodology of Sunnis in considering all companions as just or refraining from discussing their status is an ethical approach, while the Shi'i method of critiquing the companions and categorizing them into just and unjust is a scientific approach. Each methodology complements the other." He continued: "The Shi'is, who constitute a significant portion of those who pray toward the *qibla*, place all Muslims on the same scale, making no distinction between companion, successor, and those who came later, just as they do not differentiate between early and recent converts to Islam except based on their degree of adherence to what the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the twelve Imams after him brought. Companionship in itself is not an immunity from scrutiny regarding one's level of faith. On this solid foundation, they have permitted themselves – through independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) – to critique the companions and examine their degree of justice, just as they have allowed themselves to criticize those companions who failed to meet the conditions of companionship and deviated from love of the family of Muhammad (a.s.). How could they not, when the Greatest Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

'I am leaving among you that which, if you hold fast to them both, you will never go astray: the Book of God and my family, my household...'"

Based on this tradition and others like it, they believe that many companions violated this tradition by persecuting Muhammad's family and cursing some members of this lineage. How then can these violators maintain the honor of companionship, and how can they be labeled as just?!

This is the essence of the Shi'i view regarding the denial of the

36. Professor Dāwūd Ḥanafī al-Miṣrī.

attribute of justice to some companions, and these are the realistic, scientific reasons upon which they built their arguments.[37]

37. *Buḥūth fī al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*: 1/224-227.

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DISSIMULATION (TAQIYYA) BETWEEN OBLIGATION AND PROHIBITION

Among the accusations made against the Shi'is is their belief in dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and their practice of it in certain times and specific circumstances. However, the accusers have not grasped its significance. Had they verified the matter and returned to the Qur'an and tradition, they would have found that it is something necessitated by both reason and religious law.

The Reality and Purpose of Dissimulation (*Taqiyya*)

Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is derived from protection (*wiqāya*), and it means protecting oneself from harm by agreeing with others in word or deed contrary to the truth. Given this definition, it is the opposite of hypocrisy (*nifāq*), just as faith is the opposite of disbelief, for hypocrisy means showing truth while concealing falsehood. With this contrast between them, it is incorrect to consider it a branch of hypocrisy, just as the Qur'an identifies hypocrites as those who display faith while concealing disbelief. God says:

"When the hypocrites come to you, they say, 'We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of God.' God knows that you are

indeed His Messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are truly liars"[1]

The purpose of religious dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is to protect one's life, honor, and property in circumstances where a believer cannot openly declare their true position. Dissimulation is the weapon of the weak against the oppressive strong, a tool for those who face others who do not respect their blood, honor, and property, simply because they disagree on certain principles and ideas.

If this is the meaning and concept of dissimulation, and this is its purpose, then it is an instinctive matter that human reason leads to before anything else and to which human nature calls. For this reason, it is used by everyone who is tested by kings and politicians who respect nothing but their own opinions, ideas, and ambitions, and who do not hesitate to persecute anyone who opposes them in this, regardless of whether they are Muslim - be they Shi'i or Sunni. This demonstrates the utility of dissimulation and its profound benefit.

Dissimulation in the Noble Book

Dissimulation is among the Qur'anic concepts that appear in multiple places in the Qur'an. These verses contain clear references to situations where believers resort to using this natural approach during difficult circumstances in their lives to protect their own life, honor, and property, or the life, honor, and property of those connected to them. This is how the believer from among Pharaoh's people used it to protect Moses from being killed and persecuted[2], among other instances. Here are some verses indicating the legitimacy of dissimulation in the sense mentioned above:

The First Verse:

1. Qur'an, 63:1.
2. See Qur'an, 28:20.

God says: "Whoever disbelieves in God after their belief - except for one who is forced while their heart is secure in faith".[3]

You can see that the Exalted permits the display of disbelief under coercion and conformity with disbelievers out of fear of them, on the condition that the heart remains secure in faith. This has been explicitly stated by numerous exegetes.

Al-Zamakhsharī says:

It is reported that some people from Mecca were tested and apostatized from Islam after entering it. Among them were those who were coerced and uttered words of disbelief with their tongues while maintaining belief in their hearts, including ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir and his parents: Yāsir and Sumayya, and Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, and Khabbāb. As for ʿAmmār, he gave them what they wanted with his tongue under coercion...[4]

Al-Qurṭubī says:

Al-Ḥasan said: Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is permissible for people until the Day of Resurrection. He then said: The scholars have reached consensus that whoever is forced to disbelieve until they fear death, there is no sin upon them if they disbelieve while their heart is secure in faith, their spouse is not separated from them, and they are not judged as disbelievers. This is the opinion of Mālik, the Kufans, and al-Shāfiʿī.[5]

Al-Khāzin says:

"Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is only permissible when there is fear of death while maintaining sound intention, as God says: 'except for one who is forced while their heart is secure in faith.' This dissimulation is a concession."[6]

The Second Verse:

The Exalted says: "Let not the believers take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. And whoever does that has nothing to

3. Qur'an, 16:106.
4. *Al-Kashshāf*: 2/430; See also: *Majmaʿ al-Bayān lil-Ṭabrisī*: 3/388.
5. *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'an*: 4/57.
6. *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*: 1/277.

do with God, except when taking precaution against them is prudence."[7]

This verse, like its sister verse, explicitly permits dissimulation (*taqiyya*), as stated by exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhshari, al-Rāzī, al-Ālūsī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, al-Marāghī and others. The latter says:

Scholars have derived from this verse the permissibility of dissimulation (*taqiyya*), whereby a person may say or do something contrary to the truth in order to protect themselves from harm to their person, honor, or property that might come from enemies.[8]

Response to a Question:

It might be said: These two verses refer to a Muslim's dissimulation from disbelievers, but the Shi'i practice dissimulation with their Muslim brothers, so how can these verses be used as evidence for the validity of their practice?

Answer: Although the context of these verses concerns a Muslim's precaution against disbelievers, the context does not restrict the ruling of the verse when the underlying reason exists in other cases. We have learned that the reason for legislating dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is to protect life, honor, and property from destruction and ruin. If this reason exists in cases other than those mentioned in the verse, it is permissible, based on the unity of reason.

Al-Rāzī says:

The apparent meaning of the verse (the verse of *Āl 'Imrān*) is that dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is only permissible with dominant disbelievers. However, al-Shāfi'ī's school holds that when conditions between Muslims resemble those between Muslims and disbelievers, dissimulation is permitted to protect oneself. He said: Dissimulation is permitted to protect life, but is it permitted to protect property? It may be judged permissible based on the Prophet's (s.a.w.) saying: "The sanctity of a Muslim's property is like the sanctity of his blood."

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7. Qur'an, 3:28.
8. *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*: 3/136; See also: *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*: 3/153; *Al-Kashshāf*: 1/422; *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*: 8/13; *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*: 3/12; *Maḥāsin al-Ta'wīl*: 4/82.

and his (a.s.) saying: "Whoever is killed defending his property is a martyr."[9]

Al-Marāghī says in his exegesis of the verse of *Sūrat al-Naḥl*:

Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) includes being courteous to disbelievers, oppressors, and wrongdoers, speaking gently to them, smiling in their faces, and giving them money to prevent their harm and protect one's honor from them. This is not considered the forbidden alliance, but rather it is legitimate. Al-Ṭabarānī reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Whatever a believer uses to protect his honor is charity."[10]

The history before us clearly tells us about well-known Muslim leaders resorting to dissimulation (*taqiyya*) in difficult circumstances. The best example of this is what al-Ṭabarī reported in his history about al-Ma'mūn's attempt to force prominent judges and hadith scholars of his time to acknowledge the creation of the Qur'an. When these scholars saw the drawn sword, they resorted to appeasing al-Ma'mūn in his claim while concealing their true beliefs in their hearts. When they were criticized for agreeing with al-Ma'mūn, they justified their action by citing the example of 'Ammār ibn Yāsir.[11] This famous story explicitly demonstrates the permissibility of resorting to dissimulation (*taqiyya*), which some have used to defame the Shi'i.

What drove the Shi'i to practice dissimulation (*taqiyya*) among their brothers and fellow believers was fear of oppressive authorities. If there had not been pressure on the Shi'i in the past - from the era of the Umayyads, then the Abbasids and Ottomans - it would have been reasonable for the Shi'i to forget the word dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and remove it from their life's record. But unfortunately, many of their brothers were compliant tools in the hands of the Umayyads and Abbasids, who saw the Shi'i school of thought as a threat to their positions. They would incite the common Sunni

9. *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*: 8/13.
10. *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*: 3/136.
11. *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*: 7/195-206.

people against the Shi'i, killing them, persecuting them, and torturing them. As a result of these difficult circumstances, the Shi'i, and indeed anyone with any sense, had no choice but to resort to dissimulation (*taqiyya*) or abandon the sacred principles that were dearer to them than their lives and property. The evidence for this is too numerous to count.

Forbidden Kinds of Dissimulation

Just as dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is obligatory for protecting lives, honor, and property, it becomes forbidden when it leads to greater corruption, such as the destruction of religion, concealment of truth from future generations, and enemies gaining control over Muslim affairs, sanctities, and places of worship. For this reason, you find that many prominent Shi'i scholars rejected dissimulation (*taqiyya*) at times and offered themselves and their lives as sacrifices for the sake of religion.

Ayatollah Khomeini said:

> "Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is forbidden in certain prohibited and obligatory matters that represent, in the view of the Divine Legislator and religious practitioners, matters of utmost importance, such as the destruction of the Kaaba and sacred shrines, rejection of Islam and the Qur'an, explaining doctrine in a way that aligns with atheism, and other grave prohibitions. These are not covered by the evidence for dissimulation (*taqiyya*), necessity, or coercion.
>
> This is supported by the reliable narration of Mas'ada ibn Ṣadaqa which states: "Everything that a believer does among them for the sake of dissimulation (*taqiyya*) that does not lead to corruption in religion is permissible."[12]

We conclude the article with the words of the scholar al-Shahristānī, where he said:

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12. *Al-Wasā'il*: Book of Commanding Good, Chapter 25, Hadith 6; See: *Al-Rasā'il*, by Ayatollah Khomeini: 171.

"Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) is the emblem of every weak person deprived of freedom. The Shi'i community became more known for dissimulation (*taqiyya*) than others because it endured continuous oppression more than any other community. They were deprived of freedom throughout the entire Umayyad period, throughout the Abbasid era, and during most days of the Ottoman state. For this reason, they adopted the practice of dissimulation (*taqiyya*) more than any other group. Since the Shi'i community differed from opposing groups in important aspects of religious fundamentals and in many jurisprudential rulings, and opposition naturally invites surveillance, as experience confirms, the Shi'i community was often compelled to conceal their distinct practices, beliefs, legal opinions, books, and other matters. Through this concealment, they sought to protect their lives and valuables, and to maintain cordial relations and brotherhood with their fellow Muslims so that unity would not be disrupted, and so that non-believers would not sense any discord within the Islamic community that could widen the divide among the community of Muhammad." He continued: "Dissimulation (*taqiyya*) was the emblem of the Household (a.s.) to prevent harm from reaching them and their followers, to preserve their blood, to maintain the welfare of Muslims, to unite their word, and to bring together their scattered affairs. It remained a distinguishing characteristic of the Imamiyya, unlike other groups and communities. Any person who senses danger to their life or property due to spreading or displaying their beliefs must conceal and guard against places of danger. This is a matter that the natural disposition of minds requires."[13]

I ask God Most High for insight in religion and the unification of Muslim ranks in the path of truth and certainty.

"Say: This is my way; I call to God with insight, I and whoever follows me."[14]

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13. *Majallat al-Murshid*: 3/252.
14. Qur'an, 12:108.

And praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.

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